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# HOSPITAL DAYS

BY PLATOON COMMANDER

AUTHOR OF "WITH MY REGIMENT"

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.

ADELPHI TERRACE

TO  
SISTER

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

### STRETCHER-BEARERS

HERE are times when I wonder whether it is quite just that the term "handy man" should be exclusively applied to seamen of the Royal Navy. For example, we will take the case of an army bandsman, a musician, perhaps, of some attainments, who, when the regimental band plays on special occasions in the town gardens, attracts universal admiration as the first violin. When the battalion goes route-marching, the same man trudges at its head, perhaps for twenty miles, puffing lustily upon a flute; and when the battalion goes to war, he follows in the rear, carrying a stretcher.

This was the original idea. With our larger armies, the system has changed. But in the days of the existence of His Majesty's first Expeditionary Force, it was laid down in the book

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that on mobilization the band became the battalion's stretcher-bearers. With this ultimate object in view, the band in peace-time were given stretcher practice, and had on manœuvres to put up with a considerable amount of chaff from their combatant comrades. However, their value was learnt when the regiment went to war.

I remember late one October evening in the year 1914 coming upon a small tea-party in the parlour of a farm. The farm lay in a hollow in our front line, which ran then in front of the outskirts of La Bassée. I had left our trench after dusk to go and explore the farm. The building proved to be the same as many other farms in the North of France, which in those days still stood dotted everywhere more or less intact. Crossing the courtyard, with its sunken manure well, I pushed my way in through the door, and found two private soldiers sitting over the stove making a brew of tea. It was almost dark in the room, and I could not see their faces.

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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“Who’s there?” I called.

“Stretcher-bearers,” came the answer.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

If you see baby, tell him he mustn’t, is an attitude subalterns are rather apt to get into during the early stages of their service, before they have learnt to be sure of themselves, or to know by instinct what their company officer would or would not mind the men doing. I was not quite sure whether the stretcher-bearers were not all supposed to be together at battalion headquarters, and whether any men at all were allowed to stray into farm buildings.

“Mind you don’t show any light through those windows,” I said, feeling sure that in making this remark at any rate I was justified, as we had the strictest orders not to do anything to draw the enemy’s fire at night.

“Will you have a cup of tea, sir?” one of them asked hospitably.

I hesitated. It would be rather nice to have a warm by the stove and a nice cup of tea before going back to my damp trench. On the other

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hand, it being near the close of the day, the men might well have nearly come to the end of their tea ration, and I did not want to help to use up what might be the last precious handful. However, I remembered I had a box of cigarettes out fresh from home in my haversack, and thinking that I could, in a measure, return their hospitality, gladly accepted it.

We made a quaint little party sitting huddled round the stove in the gloom, with only a red glow showing from the fuel flap at the bottom. What an inimitable host on these occasions Thomas Atkins makes! There was only one cup, but this was filled with quite half the total share of tea—sweet, strong, hot, and very welcome—and handed to me. Having taken a pull, I passed the cup round, but was begged to finish it, as there was plenty more. Knowing well there was not, I made them have their share. Then the cigarettes were produced, and we fell to talking.

The two stretcher-bearers turned out one to be the late big-drummer of our band, and the

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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other one of the cornet-players. They considered that the lot of a stretcher-bearer was a hard one. He was expected to be everywhere at once, they said, and only that morning a sergeant had told them they had "cold feet." He had wanted them to go out and bring in a man lying in front of the front trenches. They had said they would as soon as it was dark, but that it was impossible by daylight.

It was all very well, but stretcher-bearers were expected to do everything, and they were only human like other men. The two had their grumble, and a good grumble too, such as every good private soldier loves, and works all the better for it afterwards.

I listened sympathetically, saying that I was sure the sergeant had been quite wrong to say that they had "cold feet," and that I knew that the work they had to do was by no means easy. It was then time for me to return. As I was going, I said jokingly :

"Well, if I stop one, as I hope I shan't, I shall look to you chaps to get me in."

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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"We'll do that all right, sir, never you fear," they replied, laughing.

Alas, that I never touched wood as I spoke!

Twelve hours later I was lying flat on my back, knocked out by a shrapnel shell.

A private soldier next me in the trench helped me off with my boots and puttees, and a fellow-subaltern gave me his field dressing, as the one I had was not enough to deal with both places.

It was not, curiously enough, until just now, as I sat down to write these recollections, that I ever thought how unselfish it was of that brother subaltern of mine to have given me his field dressing, leaving himself with nothing to bind up his own wounds if he got hit. As it happened, poor chap, he did stop one pretty badly on the same day, and our line having been forced back, he was left out by himself in the open. He was marked up in the casualty list as "missing," but later his people heard that he was a prisoner

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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of war and doing well. I sincerely hope that, before they left him, someone was able to do him the good turn that he did me, and give him their field dressing, but till the war is over and we meet once more, I shall never know.

After being hit I rolled back to our trench in a lull between the shell-fire. As is usually the case when there is a "strafe" going on, the men, except those on look-out, were all lying well down below the parapet. Being anxious to get there myself, I pitched straight into the trench, without waiting to look over, and landed on the top of a private soldier sheltering in the bottom. Thinking that at least he had received a direct hit from a high explosive, the private was at first too frightened to speak; then, recognizing the familiar khaki, he remonstrated with the unceremonious intruder in no measured terms; finally, seeing an officer's belt, he lapsed from a hurried apology into silence. I explained my arrival by saying that I had been hit.

"Pass the word back for the stretcher-bearers. The officer has been hit," the private called along

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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the trench, and then proceeded with clever, careful fingers to see what he could do for me.

The first field dressing which each man carries sewn in the lining of his tunic has saved many lives. Comprising as it does two pads of gauze and cotton-wool and a bandage, it can be ripped out of its case and clapped on to the wound, and so save the injured man, who may have to lie out hours before he can be taken back to a dressing-station, many risks from loss of blood or outside infection.

In my case I did not have long to wait, as the stretcher-bearers came up almost at once. They proved to be my friends of the night before—the former big-drummer and the other bandsman. Of course on seeing me, after our discussion the night before on the duties, good qualities, and alleged deficiencies of stretcher-bearers, these two men were on their mettle to prove their worth. It was perhaps rather a happy coincidence for me that it was these two who came up. Getting wounded away just at that moment was rather a critical operation. I had to be carried down a

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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road which was exposed to the enemy's fire, and two less determined men might not have cared to face the job. Had they waited and left me there for another half-hour, they would never have got me away at all, for the line had to fall back at that point, leaving the wounded behind in the hands of the enemy.

However, these two were determined to get me away at any price, and lifting me on to a stretcher, they started down the road. All went well for a bit, but then, to my anxiety, I noticed that the front bearer was getting rather tottery. The rear bearer was the big-drummer, and able to carry me easily, but the front man was feeling my weight. He staggered along for a few steps till we came to the shelter of a wall, and then carefully lowered his end of the stretcher till it touched the ground, turned round, mopped his brow, and shook his head at me. I smiled hopefully.

“Find me a bit heavy?”

He nodded and looked pessimistically at the big-drummer, who looked big and strong enough

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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to carry an ox. This was the first reminder I had had since being hit of my own helplessness. I was completely at these two men's mercy. Being an officer was no use to me now. I could not order them to carry me in—indeed, as it involved some personal risk to them, I could not have done that in any case. Had we been in a back lane, miles from the firing-line, and I in the same plight, they could, had they chosen, have left me there for the night. However, they were neither of them men of this sort, and the little one, after a rest, picked up his burden again, and off we started once more. We reached the dressing-station without mishap.

That field dressing-station is still vividly in my mind: the little cottage room—the floor covered with suffering humanity—the groans of a few—the laughter and jokes of others—the white, calm face of one man who was dying. They are very gentle, the dying, very grateful for the little things done for them. A glass of water held to a mortally wounded soldier's lips will bring into

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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his face the sweetest smile of gratitude, though by then he may be too weak to speak. After the hell-fire of bloodshed and fighting through which they have passed, it seems as though they are prepared for their time of peace.

Our doctor was in the cottage, and came up to me at once. He bound up the more serious of my two knocks, and said he would come back and see to the other one as soon as he had time. The Adjutant looked in for a second, but had no time to stop, as things were pretty critical with our line. A brother officer also looked in, and saying, "Bad luck, old chap!" when he saw me, went on again. Five minutes later he was killed, shot through the head. After he had bandaged my other leg, the doctor had me moved into an inner room and placed on a mattress with my back to the wall in a corner. I had a cup of tea, and a biscuit, and a cigarette.

Looking back on the time, considering that I was in the cottage fourteen or fifteen hours, it seems rather remarkable that I never had anything to eat. There was plenty of bread and

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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jam, and some cheese, of all three of which good things one was apt to eat ravenously in those days whenever opportunity offered, but somehow that day I did not seem to want anything. Perhaps it was the morphia. Before leaving England I had bought some in Falmouth. Along with many other things one was advised to get, and never afterwards used, I had carried the blessed stuff about in a small tube in my pocket for weeks.

After I had been lying in the small back-room by myself for about an hour, I began to reflect that the injury to my leg was getting painful. Not that I wish to pretend that I was unconscious of the fact that my right ankle was smashed, at any time. One kind friend did ask me recently if it hurt to get a bullet through one's ankle. I asked him if he had a poker in his office, and on his saying that he believed there was such a thing somewhere, I advised him to go back, and put his fat foot on the desk and bash it as hard as ever he could with the weapon,

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## STRETCHER-BEARERS

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which would perhaps answer his question better than anything I could tell him.

However, I was very lucky, for I was never in acute discomfort such as one reads of people suffering who break their bones. But, as I was saying, after I had been by myself for some time in the small back-room, I began to get rather fidgety, and then bethought me of the morphia I had bought at Falmouth, so I helped myself to three of the little tablets. Later, Evans was brought in, and I passed the tube across to him, and also another subaltern, so we made quite a little morphia party, and all sat round the wall blinking drowsily away at each other. However, the morphia we took sent none of us to sleep.



## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

THE Medical Officer is the official designation by which the doctor attached to a battalion is known. I believe that medical men, as a rule, do not like to be called Doctor So-and-So, and that in the case of surgeons it is certainly quite wrong to do so. But whatever his special line in private life, the medical representative with a battalion is always called "the doctor."

Living as he does in the mess with the officers of the regiment, he becomes one of the family—the one who knows a bit about medicine and broken bones. In the mess that circle of awe, which separates even the oldest standing of family physicians from his patients, completely vanishes.

As time goes on, the doctors out at the front are every now and again getting a share of

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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honours, decorations, and mentions in despatches. Well, they deserve all they get. No one, except those out there, can know how hard these men work. In the clearing-stations, at railhead, all along the lines of communication, in the big hospitals at the base, on boats, at ports, and in our own great city, everywhere when there is heavy fighting in progress, the doctors work without any fixed interval to mark day from night, without any special meal-times, without any recreation whatsoever. To these all the honour that is due. But there is one type of doctor especially who must be remembered.

He has no clean overall to work in ; it is very probable his khaki is as stained and torn as any private soldier's. I doubt if he has the means by him to wash his hands before going from one patient to another ; he certainly has not generally the time. He works always within reach of the shells, and often among spattering bullets. His consulting-room, surgery, and ward, are the four crumbled walls of a roofless cottage ; his nurses sweat-begrimed, blood-stained stretcher-bearers.

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## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

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Gunga Din, the native water-carrier, has had his ode: another might well be written for the regimental doctor.

I so well remember our own regimental doctor.

He joined us a week before war was declared. Before that he had lived up at the hospital somewhere, and had been a rather vague personality, to whom we sent the men when they were sick, or said their feet hurt them and they could not march. The officers themselves did not have much dealing with him; if they felt ill, they went home and saw their family doctor, or to a specialist in London. As with many other things that are provided free by the Government, fellows with means of their own were a little supercilious, and inclined to say they would as soon do without him. He was just "the doctor." Some of us were not quite sure what his name was, even, and we only saw him occasionally when someone brought him into the mess for a drink.

Then, as the storm-clouds gathered, so that

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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there could be no mistaking war, England's little army mobilized, and among other changes, our doctor came to live with us in the mess. One or two fellows unused to the unfamiliar face asked, "Who was that?"

"That's the doctor," they were told.

"Does he come with us?" asked a very young and inexperienced youth.

"Of course he does," said a Major, who had been through South Africa, "and jolly glad you'll be of him."

We were all too busy those first few days of mobilization to notice the doctor much, but one evening it was announced that he would give a lecture to officers on field dressings.

How well I remember that lecture! Our little Irish doctor standing there in the middle of the room, with an unwound bandage in his hand, explaining how it should be put on. He told us, too, something about wounds. There were four parts of the body, he said, where, if a man was hit, anyone could render him useful first-aid. These special parts were the two arms and

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## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

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the two legs. If he was hit in these places, the thing to do was to put the field dressing on at once, above the wound, applying a tourniquet if an artery was severed. If the man was hit in the body or head—well, the doctor shrugged his shoulders in a way that made us think. He explained how to plug a wound, and the danger of moving a man hit in the stomach. The lecture brought home to us the personality and rôle of the little man who was living in our mess. We understood then, as we had not before, what a very big part he might have to play, so far as we were concerned, in the war. Our lives might depend on him. Was he a good fellow, we wondered? He looked it, anyway.

Later we all went off to France, the doctor with us. Up to this time it had seemed that he had very little work to do. The men were all well and fit, and he used to spend a good deal of the day reading the papers in the ante-room. When we were on the march, he rode on a horse at the end of the column, beside the empty ambulance waggon.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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We went into the trenches; the doctor came with us. He lived at battalion headquarters, with the Colonel, the Senior Major, the Adjutant, and the Scout Officer. Battalion headquarters was a dug-out three or four hundred yards behind the front trenches. He had a little chest of dressings with him and some stretcher-bearers. It was rather rough quarters for a doctor, we thought.

Fighting started, and we did not see much of him. We were busy, and so—though we did not all of us realize it—was he. The battalion was relieved, and we went back to billets. At night the officers gathered round a table in a cottage kitchen, and drank hot rum and water.

“Hullo, Doc.! Haven’t seen you for ages,” said one. “Where have you been all these days?”

“Oh, round about,” said the doctor.

“By the way,” asked another, “where was old Snooky hit?”

Snooky was a brother officer who had been hit the second day.

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## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

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"Through the knee and thigh," said the doctor. "Rather bad, poor chap! We had a bit of a job to get him in; it hurt him being moved, and he was out in that bit of trench we had to come back from."

At the time we all took it for granted that it was the doctor's job to go out and bring in wounded; so did he. We knew, of course, that he was a jolly good chap to take it on as he did, but, beyond that, thought no more of the matter.

However, it was not till my own time came that I really got to *know* our doctor. In a cottage not three hundred yards from the Boche, with shrapnel knocking slates off the roof and bullets splashing against the wall, the floor three parts covered with mangled, maimed, and bleeding humanity, he stood, cheery as ever.

"Hullo, Cully!" he said, as they carried me in; "where have they got you?"

He made me comfortable against the wall; bound up, as though it was nothing, a wound from which (quite wrongly) I imagined I was going to bleed to death; and with a promise to

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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return, was off attending to three fresh cases just brought in. All that day he worked. Half the regiment passed through his hands.

Our line thinned, and it looked more like the Germans getting the village. He came and had a cigarette beside me.

“Phew!” he said. “I hope they can keep ‘em off—else you and I will be going back to Germany together.”

The matter-of-fact way in which he announced his intention of stopping behind to take his luck with the wounded was as good as a tonic to all of us lying there.

Nor did his work end that day with looking after his own wounded. In the course of the afternoon a message came that the field dressing-station belonging to the battalion on our left had been set ablaze by shell-fire. He went off at once with a few stretcher-bearers whom he was able to collect. The scene, as it was afterwards described to me, remains in my memory. The house which was used as a dressing-station was a farm building with a thatched roof. By us in

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## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

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that part of the line then the use of the red cross had long been given up as a protective sign. The emblem seemed to draw the hottest fire. It was an incendiary shell that struck the roof, which burst immediately into flames. The farm itself was filled with wounded lying on stretchers and on the ground. Many of these men were unable to move by themselves; those that could were warned of the danger, and crawled away as best they were able. The army being then engaged in the first battle for Calais, and held to a man in the front trenches by the heavy massed attacks of the Germans, who were throwing every ounce they knew into an effort to break through, there was no means of getting hold of men for such an emergency as a field dressing-station on fire.

When our doctor and his three stretcher-bearers arrived, the flames were beginning to lick down the walls towards the helpless wounded. To make matters worse, a layer of straw had been laid on the floor for the greater comfort of the men lying there. It was a question of

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moments before a bit of burning woodwork fell among the straw and set it ablaze. To add to the difficulties, the Germans from time to time sent a round of shrapnel at the blazing building.

Our doctor and his stretcher-bearers grasped the situation at once, and diving into the farm, they had soon carried out half a dozen men. These they laid behind the farm, and went back to get more. When all but three of the wounded had been carried to a place of safety, the straw on the floor caught fire. Guided by the cries of the unhappy victims, the doctor went again into the smoke-filled room. A lucky trip discovered two of the men, who were removed to safety ; the third took more finding, but he, too, was rescued just in time.

A fresh home had then to be found for the wounded, and they had to be carried there. All this work fell on the heads of the two doctors and the devoted stretcher-bearers. A quarter of a mile ahead the fierce fight was raging which was intended to menace our very shores. The sharp cracking of the rifles and the boom of the guns

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## THE REGIMENTAL DOCTOR

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never ceased. Fresh wounded poured in. Our doctor had to go back to his own dressing-station, which had overflowed into the houses round.

I watched him working, quiet, methodical, giving to each man the best attention that he could with the means at his disposal. Only now and again when a man grievously wounded was laid in front of him, someone for whom with the means at his disposal he knew he could do nothing, did a look of helplessness come into his face.

As he said to me in his expressive way : "It is so beastly looking after those poor devils hit through the stomach. They look as though they knew they were going to die."

"But are they?" I asked, knowing well that stomach wounds are by no means necessarily fatal.

"One or two are pretty bad," he said, and then went off to attend to a fresh case.

Whenever fighting is fierce and our casualty

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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lists are long, a thought should be given to the doctors attached to regiments, as well as for those who fight. They are right up with the regiments, sharing the shell-fire and sometimes the bullets. In one day, perhaps a hundred, perhaps two hundred cases may be brought to them to deal with. Of course, there is not a great deal that they can do under such circumstances ; they can clean the wound a bit with iodine, and put on a bandage. But it is the feeling of the doctor being there that the men appreciate, the confidence he gives them, and his cheery word. For each man brought to him our doctor had always a word of encouragement, and it was a word, too, which, as I can bear out, in those times went a long way. "I looks towards him," as they say, every time.

## EASY STAGES

WHEN it was dark the horse ambulances came right up into the small village that we were defending, and we were carried out of the dressing-station and stowed in our places. There was myself, Evans, with a broken shoulder, and another subaltern. One of the orderlies said we were to call for a fourth case, who was lying in a house just outside the village. This fourth case was a German, and both Evans and myself were rather surprised that he should have been put in an ambulance with three officers. Evans said something of the sort to the orderly, who said that the Hun was a very young one—only a boy, in fact—and rather badly hit, and they wanted to get him back as soon as they could.

This was all a very long time ago, and per-

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haps circumstances have altered cases now, but certainly that young Hun had more fuss made over him than some of our own wounded. He was only just eighteen, and had only had six weeks' military training before finding himself in the thick of some of the heaviest fighting of the war. I talked to him a bit, and got some tea and biscuits for him at a halt. I must say he seemed to me, as far as any little Hun could be, quite harmless.

Our first stop was at the field ambulance, about two miles back from the village. Here there was an opportunity to give us medical attention on a more elaborate scale than at the dressing-station. There were two doctors working in the kitchen of a farm-house. We were carried in in pairs and laid on mattresses. My doctor was a most cheery cove, with a fox-hunting kind of countenance and a khaki stock tie. He took off my old bandages, cleaned the wounds with iodine, and did me up again. Then he put a white morphia tablet under my tongue, gave me a cigarette, told me not to go

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## EASY STAGES

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to sleep with it still alight, wished me a good journey, and I was finished with.

Evans and I were then carried to another building, where the wounded who had been dressed were being laid. I cannot quite remember what kind of a room it was now, but it was a longish sort of place, with straw all down one side of it, and a large urn of tea going in the middle. The place was nearly empty, and Evans and I were laid down side by side at the far end on our stretchers.

I suppose the ambulances are always bringing up fresh supplies of stretchers to the field dressing-station, otherwise I don't know how things are arranged, for as far as I could see on the trip we made, each patient who was a "stretcher case" (*i.e.*, who could not walk for himself) kept his stretcher from the time he was put on it near the place where he was hit till he was put in the train at railhead. It certainly is much the most comfortable way for a man with broken limbs to do the journey. He can be lifted with a minimum of discomfort to himself, and put in an

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ambulance much more easily, by sliding him into his shelf on the stretcher, than if he had to be taken off the stretcher and lifted on to the shelf.

Which sliding process reminds me of an experience. It was very dark by the time the horse ambulances came up to the dressing-station, and as no light could be lighted the ambulance orderlies had a bit of job getting us all stowed away. When my turn came, two of them lifted me up very carefully on my stretcher, and put the stretcher on to the top shelf. Unfortunately, being long in the leg as well as the body, I stuck out a bit at both ends of the stretcher. They were putting me in feet first, and only noticed that my head was inclined to stick out. So, seizing the two rear handles of the stretcher, one of the orderlies started to push it further in, which brought my injured feet into contact with the other end of the ambulance. Feeling some resistance, and never guessing it was me, the orderly, before I could call out, gave the stretcher a harder push. He was just going to give an-

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## EASY STAGES

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other shoved when I got my breath, explained to him what he was doing, and asked him to be more careful.

Of course, orderlies as a whole are a most careful class of men, and this story must not be considered typical of usual experiences. I don't know why it should be, but during a period such as being moved back to hospital, of which one's recollections are necessarily hazy, it is the incidents such as this that stand out the most clearly.

There was another little incident I remember, trifling in itself, but having its humorous side. At the dressing-station, where we had first been taken after being hit, Evans and I had been laid side by side in a room of a cottage. I had been all for getting out of the place as quickly as possible. It was only three or four hundred yards from the Boches; a fierce fight was going on all round the village, and we were both of us for the time useless for fighting. I could only lie in one position—on my back, and I saw no fun in staying there till a Boche came along and stuck a bayonet in my stomach (if he did not, in the ex-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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citement of the moment, *happen to notice* I was wounded). However, Evans said he was in no hurry, and rather than appear to be anxious to get out of the firing-line, I did not pursue the subject further.

Well, at our second halt two miles back, when the motor ambulances came up for us in the morning, I had just asked for some bread and milk for breakfast, which was being prepared. Evans did not want to wait for this. I did. We argued. Finally Evans said he saw no point in staying in a place where a fifteen-inch shell might land on one at any moment, when we could get back to the comparative safety of railhead. I pointed out that the day before he had laughed at me for being anxious to get away, and said that nothing would induce me to move till I had had my breakfast.

It was our transport officer who had managed to get the breakfast for us. He and our Quartermaster had their camp just by the field ambulance. They were both of them very good to us, doing everything they could to make us com-

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## EASY STAGES

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fortable. The regiment had had a pretty bad day, nearly half of the officers and men getting laid out, and one felt it was so much worse for the transport officer and Quartermaster having to stay behind getting up supplies and ammunition, while all the time they knew that just in front their pals and brother officers were being hard pressed. I could see, when they came to us, that the strain of the past twenty-four hours had told on them more than on any of us.

After we had finished breakfast, Smithey, the transport officer, told us that our motor ambulance had come up to fetch us back to railhead. "Be nice to the chap who is driving you," he said. "They are an awfully decent lot of fellows, who have brought out their own cars, and fitted them up at their own expense and everything, and they get more kicks than halfpence."

We were all of us particularly careful to be appreciative to our driver, who took us back in a smooth-running, beautifully sprung, private car, which he had knocked to bits to fit out as an ambulance. I could imagine that when he was

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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an "empty" he must have thought it an ungrateful world, as he said that he got "strafed" all the way up for getting in the way of ammunition waggons and troops on the march, and finally by the S.M.O. for arriving late. We had an uneventful journey back to railhead, where we were run right alongside the hospital train.

The journey down to the base, in spite of everything that nurses, doctors, and orderlies could do to make us comfortable, was not a pleasant experience. In the first place, it seemed as if it would never end, and did, in fact, take many hours. Those were important days for our army, and the line was needed for men and ammunition, as well as wounded soldiers. However, the train itself was fitted out to make us as comfortable as possible, and it was, I think, a combination of peevishness and real bone weariness that made us discover after half an hour the many disadvantages of our respective lengths of seat. Evans and I spent most of our time, till we got to the base, trying a variety of postures and rearrangements of rugs and pil-

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## EASY STAGES

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lows, in a futile endeavour to make ourselves comfortable. We were helped in this with unfailing kindness and good-humour by the orderly, the nurse, and occasionally the doctor, who each knew that all we wanted was a good sleep, which I may say was the first thing we all had when the journey was over.



## AT THE BASE

WE were an odd assortment in our ward, drawn from all branches of the service, wounded in various places, but united by a sense of thankfulness at being alive at all. We had come out of some big fighting. Most of us had not had time for the amenities of life during the past fortnight. Our clothes were muddy and ragged, our faces unshaven and unwashed. The eyes of some glittered brightly from want of sleep, which, after being held forcibly at bay for so many days, would not come now of its own sweet will. These talked quickly and excitedly to each other of the fighting they had just been through—an infantry subaltern of how his company had suddenly found Germans approaching on three sides, and how he had never thought to get back with his platoon; a gunner officer of his section of field-guns, which had got stuck in a

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ploughed field, and had to stand and fight all day. Others slept. Heavens! how they slept—like logs—motionless except for the rhythmical rise and fall of their chests as they breathed shortly and heavily! Watching them reminded me of the day I had landed in France. That was not very long after Mons, and I remember coming on a private soldier behind a shed on the quay where we disembarked. An unkempt, hardly human-looking creature he appeared as he lay flat on his back on the cobbles, his arm through the sling of his rifle, his ragged, red-bearded chin pointing to the sky, dust and blood and powder stains upon his clothes and face, sleeping oblivious of ships, and fresh drafts of men, and everything—almost savagely, as it seemed, in his utter weariness. “So this is war,” we, who had freshly landed for our share, thought as we passed this stray scrap of humanity washed back, Heaven knows in what fashion, to a base port. And a nasty-looking business it was, too, one reflected. For, however much the sight of the worn-out soldier might inspire one

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## AT THE BASE

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with a sense of the glory of doing one's duty, the performance of duty seemed to promise little pleasure in its execution.

Well, well, things are generally worse than they seem, and bad times are often good times when they don't look like it. I expect if one could have awakened that war-worn Tommy and got him to take a penny for his thoughts, he would have said—among other things—that he was having the “doss of his life,” and with a grunt turned over to sleep again. As a matter of fact, we most of us, that first afternoon in the ward of the base hospital, looked as he did. The wounded were coming in so fast that they could not be undressed as soon as they arrived, but had to be put to bed as they were and await their turn. I remember a vague feeling of resentment at being put to bed in my clothes, which went quickly when a Sister came along, and, bending over me, said : “Oh, poor fellow ! let's get him out of those muddy things, and see if we can't make him a bit more comfortable.” I remember very well my breeches being cut off me. I was

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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helped into a deliciously clean, soft flannel night-shirt, and then the Sister went away and came back with a basin of steaming water, some soap, a towel, and a sponge. I was washed ; this was a most delicious process. I had not felt hot water over my face for three weeks. Soon after this tea was brought round—a large cup of tea and some bread-and-butter and cake were placed on a tray beside each patient.

After tea I rummaged in my haversack and unearthed a box of cigarettes. These proved welcome to some of the others, and we all sat up and talked and smoked. The first question naturally was : "Where did they get you?"

One fellow had been hit across the bridge of his nose in such a way that his eyesight was affected—happily only temporarily ; however, he, poor fellow ! was very anxious, and was continually lifting his bandages to see how much he could see, incurring thereby the disapproval of the Sister. Another had a broken shoulder, and another a nerve severed in his leg.

About six the doctors came to look at us.

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## AT THE BASE

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This was our first inspection by the doctors of the hospital since we had come in. We had had our wounds dressed, of course, at the field dressing-station and field ambulances, but this was the first place where it was possible to give one more special treatment. Four doctors went the rounds—two surgeons and two sort of underlings. It was most impressive to lie there waiting one's turn, and watch them move from bed to bed, examining each patient's wounds, conferring together, giving some short orders, and passing on. However, the business of the examination was more awe-inspiring to watch than to undergo. The doctors when they actually came proved to be the most cheerful and reassuring of people.

“Well—what about you?” said the head surgeon, when my turn came. “In the leg—ah! Let us just have a look at it, Nurse.” The bandages I had on were carefully removed and my wound exposed to view.

“Now, I am not going to hurt you,” said the surgeon, taking a long, thin, glittering lance, and

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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bending over me. "Aren't you?" I thought; "well, I shall be the best judge of that;" and, not believing his promise for a moment, I got hold of a good fistful of bed-clothes and looked up at the ceiling. "I shall get a nasty jab in a minute," I thought to myself, as I felt him tinkering round.

"There, that is all over," he said to me a minute later; "I did not hurt you, did I?"

"Finished, sir?" I said, immensely surprised, for I had hardly known he was doing anything.

"Yes, quite finished," he said; "that'll get all right;" and with one or two instructions to the nurse, he moved on to the next bed.

Much relieved, I lit a fresh cigarette and sat up to watch my neighbour being put through his paces. In hospital one soon gets used to any sight, however horrible, except a man in great pain. Happily in our ward there was no one in much pain, but two or three cases were pretty badly knocked about. My neighbour's was a marvellous escape. The bullet had struck him in the back a quarter of an inch from his spine,

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## AT THE BASE

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and come out somewhere in front just below his shoulder-blade. One would not have thought a bullet could take such a course without passing through some vital part, but this bullet had not even grazed his lung. I had a good view of the places of entry and exit when the bandages were off, and was nearly as interested as the nurses and doctors. The head surgeon was explaining to the wounded man what a marvellous escape he had had, when my attention was distracted by someone moving about at the foot of my bed, and a cheery voice saying, "I want you."

Turning towards the speaker, I saw a trim-looking nurse by my bedside with one hand on a small table on wheels. On the table were a basin of steaming water and a box of dressings. The nurse gently moved the bed-clothes from my feet, and, taking off my old bandages, examined my injuries. She then took a towel, and, folding a bandage in it, dropped it in the basin of water. When the bandage was well soaked she lifted the towel from the basin and started to take the bandage in her hands. The water was nearly

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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boiling, the bandage steaming hot, and as the nurse's fingers touched it, she flipped them and drew in her breath. "Whew, it's hot," she said. "It must be," I answered. "What are you going to do with it?"

"Put it on your foot," she replied.

"Not if I know it," I said quickly, half-sitting up in bed.

"Highty-tighty! what's this? Now, you do as nurse tells you at once." The matron came along and put her hand on my shoulder. "The fomentation is to be as hot as you can bear it." The matron touched the bandage: "That's all right, Nurse," she said; "he won't find that too hot."

Whether "he" would find it too hot or not, there was no arguing with the matron, and I submitted reluctantly to the treatment prescribed.

The hot bandage was not as hot on my foot as it had looked off, and, after being assured by the nurse that I could have it off instantly if it wasn't comfortable, I submitted, while yards and yards of bandage were wound round

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## AT THE BASE

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to keep the dressing in its place. However, under nurse's expert fingers there was no pain to be feared, and I was soon once more tucked up in bed.

One of the first things a new patient learns on getting into hospital is that his nurse will hardly ever hurt him. It is not only in the touch; it is the way they set about their work. Just as a horse knows when he has a fool on his back, so does a patient instinctively know who is and who is not competent to handle him. Nurses are born, not made; anyway, some girls make natural nurses, others don't; they are so afraid of hurting one that they end by doing it—happily, outside the family circle, they don't get much opportunity.



## THE MASCOT

HOSPITAL orderlies are an attentive and hard-working class of men, but they naturally come in for a great deal of abuse. Irritated by enforced inactivity, and perhaps by pain as he lies in bed, the patient feels he must say something to somebody. He dare not abuse his doctor; he does not like to abuse the nurse; but the orderly can always be found fault with. He is a regular Jack of all trades, is the orderly of a hospital ward—wanted here, there, and everywhere, getting few thanks, many complaints, and seldom pausing from his task of doing things for other people during the hours that he is on duty.

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There was the orderly at No. — Base Hospital. I do not know why, but I shall always remember him. The first time I saw him was as

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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I was coming round from an anæsthetic. He had been put to sit beside me. Coming round from an operation, as anyone who has been under an anæsthetic knows, is a peculiar business. One is sometimes querulous, and often sick. Also, one always wants to know all about the operation. As I opened my eyes, I saw a gaunt creature with ears like a bat's wings and spectacles. A pretty nurse, and I should have held out my hand appealingly and enjoyed being comforted. As it was, I merely looked at the apparition beside me. He stared back.

“Everything all right?” I said.

My voice was very low and husky, and he could not hear me. He shook his head. Again I repeated my question, this time trying to speak louder, and, in the effort, making myself cough.

“Want to be sick?” he asked, fishing a basin up from under the bed.

I relapsed into silence until I was confident of being able to make myself heard. Then I began again:

“Will you kindly take that basin away?” I

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## THE MASCOT

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said, pointing to the object on the bed. "I feel perfectly well."

He looked doubtful. "You might come over queer, though; best keep it here," he demurred.

"I shall not come over queer," I answered with all the dignity I could muster. "Will you take it away?"

He rose to his feet and bent over me—six feet two inches of him, a most incongruous object, with thin, narrow legs and huge hobnail boots, and large flapping ears, and spectacles. I was on the point of screaming, when the sergeant in charge of the orderlies came in cheerily with the bullet they had extracted from my body, which he had brought for me as a souvenir. Seeing I had come round, he sent the orderly away.

"Well, how do you like our Mascot, sir?" he said.

"Your what?" I asked.

"That orderly you had with you—we call him our Mascot. Rum-looking cove, isn't he? He is always put to sit with operation cases."

As long as I live I shall never forget No. —

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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Base Hospital's Mascot, and I take my hat off to him, too, for he brought me luck.

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However, the Mascot had a very valuable side. He was endlessly kind-hearted. He used to spend nearly all the time he had off duty in doing little errands for us, making purchases in the town, taking our letters and telegrams, going round the other hospitals trying to find out the whereabouts of our friends. Poor Mascot! I often think of him now, and with feelings of real gratitude and affection. It was he that sent off for me my wire telling the folks at home that I was safe and sound, and only slightly the worse for a couple of German bullets. We had a great business with that telegram, as, after I had written it out in English and he had gone off with it, he brought it back again to say that the postal authorities said that all telegrams must be in French. We had a fearful job between us composing the necessary French effusion.

Then another rôle he played was writing

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## THE MASCOT

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letters at the dictation of those unable to write them for themselves. The fellow who had been hit across the nose, and had his eyes bandaged, was an Adjutant of gunners. One of the first things he did when he was brought into our ward was to send for our long-legged orderly, make him sit down beside his bed, and dictate a long letter about his kit, which he had left up at the front, and which he wished to recover. It was just the sort of letter which an Adjutant might be expected to dictate, very precise and accurate in detail. It was a quaint sight to see the Mascot sitting there laboriously taking down the instructions.

Of all the patients, however, to whom the Mascot made himself of use, the person to whom he was most valuable was a very young Second Lieutenant, who lay in a corner bed of our ward. Poor chap ! he had come back as the result of a nervous breakdown which had followed upon such a fortnight's experiences as might have shaken the nerves of any man. He himself gave some details of that time. The youngest officer

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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in his regiment, he had been with them from Mons; he had endured the trials of that retreat, and had seen old comrades go and fresh faces arrive through the successive operations of the Marne and Aisne. It was a reorganized battalion that went in the general move up to Flanders. However, there was still a sufficient proportion of the men he knew, and of old brother officers, to make it feel like his own regiment. Once the army was up in Flanders, as everyone knows, a busy time began. For a week the subaltern got no proper sleep at all: he was out on patrol, groping forward with his platoon, or digging; then the main British and German forces came into contact; a three days' battle of great intensity followed. At the end of this time he was the only officer out of four left with his company, and one of five officers left altogether. A proportionate number of men had also fallen. Many of those who had gone he had seen fall, and either be buried or sent back to England to recover. He, untouched, had still to stick it out. What was left of the regiment was withdrawn and sent back

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## THE MASCOT

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to rest in the rear. They had not been back long when they were ordered to parade again. Numbers only permitted the formation of one company. This company was ordered forward to take its place in a gap. The British began a counter-attack, and the subaltern's company, containing all the remnants of what had been his regiment, moved forward with the rest.

As luck would have it, the frontage allotted to the company was raked by machine-gun fire. As they advanced, man after man was shot down; one by one the subaltern saw three of his five remaining brother officers killed—only he and a Major were left. Then a bullet grazed his cheek; he put his hand to his face, and saw it covered with blood, then he fell face downwards in the mud and cried. He cried bitterly, as though he had been ten years old instead of twenty. All he remembers is making an effort to rise, and someone bending over him. He thinks it was the Major, telling him not to bother, but just to lie there and rest.

He told me this story himself. I had not

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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before fully understood what caused a nervous breakdown, but I now felt that I knew better.

He did not talk much, but would lie there by the hour playing with the sheets, or looking straight in front of him. However, the Mascot seemed to have a wonderful effect upon him, and to be the only person who could take him out of himself. Other people might bring him fruit and books and papers ; he would thank them quietly, and have them laid on the table beside him, never touching them again. But if the long-legged orderly brought him back a jig-saw puzzle, or some such little thing from the town, he would play with it by the hour.

Poor fellow ! he was unlucky even in the hospital, for the night after he arrived, the patient in the next bed died, and a few days later another man put in the same bed also passed away. Although many men may have fallen by one's side on the battle-field, their death affects one more in a ward. One of these poor fellows was delirious all the night before he died, and fought and struggled with his nurse. I could

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## THE MASCOT

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see that the subaltern seemed to have been rather put back by the affair.

When the second chap also died, and had to be carried out, he sent for the doctor. I heard distinctly what he said to him, and gruesome as it all was, I could not help laughing.

“ Doctor,” he said, “ if anyone else dies in this bed next to mine, I shall die too. Can’t you put ‘em further away ?”



## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

ONE day, just after lunch, the doctor came round with the Sister, saying that a hospital ship was going out that day for England. Did any of us want to go? he asked. We most of us said we did, except for a few who were in a good deal of pain, and felt disinclined to be moved. The doctor went round from bed to bed, stopping to consider the merits of each case. To all he thought fit to travel he gave a label marked "Cot case" or "Sitting up," according to the nature of their wounds and general state of fitness.

When he came to me, he shook his head kindly, and said that I had better stay a little longer at the base hospital, as my wounds were very septic. This was a great disappointment, and when he saw how I took it, he asked me if I

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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wanted to go very much. I said I did, and he said he would ask the head surgeon. Greatly to my delight, he came back later and said that the head surgeon did not think the journey would do me any harm.

Great preparations then went on in the ward getting ready those who were to go. For the most part, our travelling costume consisted of a woollen waistcoat over our pyjamas, a rug, and a dressing-gown. Some, whose bodies or legs were uninjured, put on the trousers or jackets of their uniform, as the case might be. I wore my khaki jacket and hat. The hat I have since lost, but the jacket I have kept, and it now forms the sole surviving item of the fairly extensive kit with which I started for the front.

The journey by motor ambulance from the hospital to the boat was one we all dreaded. We had already had a taste of the cobbled stones of Boulogne when we were brought to the hospital from the train, and though the ambulances went as slowly and carefully as they could, and were comfortable vehicles, with well-contrived springs,

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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a certain amount of jolting over such roadways was inevitable. However, the thought that we were taking another step towards England kept us all in good spirits, and it was a cheerful party that was loaded up into the ambulance at the steps of the hospital door. We were a party of four—all stretcher cases. One chap had had his face peppered by shrapnel fragments, and had one eye completely and the other partially bandaged. Poor fellow! he had been for a week in terrible anxiety about his eyesight, and always trying to lift the bandages, and see how much he could see when the nurse was not looking. Happily, it was by this time certain that he would not lose his sight. Another had a bullet through his thigh, and also a badly shattered thumb. The third hit was through the shoulder. On our way to the ship we exchanged accounts of how we had got hit.

The man with the bandaged eyes was a gunner officer, and had caught part of a shell which had landed among his battery. The man hit in the thigh and hand was an Adjutant of Yeomanry.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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It was the first time his Yeomanry had been in action, and he was very proud of the way they had acquitted themselves. They had had a pretty trying day, he said, eight of the officers getting hit, and a proportionate number of men. He himself had had an awful business to get back at all. Somehow he had managed to walk and crawl nearly a mile until he found some stretcher-bearers.

It is very remarkable how many men, who have been hit in a way which subsequently prevents them from moving from their beds for many months, are able to make the one supreme effort to get back to their own lines.

The fourth of the party was a cavalry officer, who had been promoted from the ranks, and a splendid type of man he was. His regiment had suddenly been thrown into a gap in the front line and suffered heavily.

Though we did not realize it at the time, the war then had reached a critical stage for the Allies, and especially for Great Britain. We were all of us the results of the first battle for

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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Ypres. Wave after wave of men, and salvo after salvo of shells, were hurled against our thin line in the fierce endeavour to break through to Calais. All we were conscious of was a feeling of having had a lot to do, rather too much to do, and of feeling thoroughly tired out.

In due course our ambulance came to a standstill on the wharf beside which the hospital ship lay moored. It was dusk, and the business of getting the wounded on board was going on rapidly. The young doctor in charge of us hailed a ship's officer standing on the deck, and said he had a party of wounded officers to be taken on board. Stretcher-bearers were sent down the gangway, and we were carried on deck. Here we found an ingenious arrangement for lowering us to the big saloon, which had been turned into an officers' sick-bay. Cases were lowered below by what had been once, I suppose, the baggage lift. In this way all the discomfort and difficulty was avoided of carrying wounded men down the narrow gangways and stairs that connect the different parts of a ship. Indeed, one wonders

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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how without such a lift they would ever have got many of us below.

The sensation of being laid upon the platform and feeling it suddenly sink with one into the depths of the ship was a little eerie, but once below, one was transported to a sort of fairyland.

The saloon was dotted with cots; each hung swing fashion between trestles, in such a way that the patient would get the minimum of discomfort from the rolling of the ship. Trim naval nurses were moving about between the cots, and orderlies were helping to get patients settled in and made comfortable. One or two more lightly wounded cases were sitting about in arm-chairs. The gunner with the bandaged head, the Yeomanry Adjutant, and myself, were put in a row in three cots along the centre of the saloon.

It was getting late, and soon after we were settled down a steward came along, and asked us what we would like for dinner. He showed us the menu, which comprised pea-soup, grilled herring, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and apple-tart. We had been on rather lighter fare

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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at the hospital—chicken, bread and milk, and so forth; and before that, while still with our units, had had mostly bully beef and biscuits. The menu looked most appetizing, and the Yeomanry Adjutant said it would do him very nicely. I said the same.

“Will you take all the courses?” asked the steward.

“Oh yes,” we both answered.

“And what will you have to drink?” said the steward.

“Oh, I don’t know,” said the Yeomanry Adjutant thoughtfully. “I think I’ll have a small bottle.”

“Yes, sir; a bottle of what?” said the steward.

“Of champagne, of course,” said the Adjutant, seeming much surprised at being asked such a question.

“And you, sir?” said the steward, turning to me.

“Have you got any Bass?” I asked.

“Yes, sir,” he answered.

“Well, bring me a bottle of that.”

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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The gunner was more cautious, and took only the soup, fish, vegetables, and a milk and soda.

The Yeomanry officer and I enjoyed our dinners thoroughly, and waxed quite convivial, exchanging anecdotes across our cots. I was just watching the froth, as the steward replenished my glass from a second bottle of Bass, when the doctor came along, and shaking his finger at me, ordered the beer to be taken away. The Yeomanry officer, who had finished his bottle, lay back in bed pretending to be asleep, a replete and happy smile flickering about his lips.

We both passed the most awful night. The Yeomanry officer had a nightmare about 2 a.m.

“Stick it, lads, stick it! Burrr! you——” unprintable language following, and it is to be supposed he was prodding the retreating portions of a German. “Stick it, lads, stick it!” he called again.

“For goodness’ sake, shut up!” I said hoarsely, leaning out of my cot, and trying to reach the rail of his.

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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"Hullo! What is it?" He opened his eyes and rubbed them sleepily. "Have I been talking in my sleep?" he asked.

I told him that he had, and he said he was sorry.

"Whew! It is fearful hot in here, isn't it?" he said.

Being unable to sleep myself, and in a peevish frame of mind, I agreed with him. We rang the bell for the night Sister, and complained of the stuffiness of the ward. She, good soul, little knowing how we had brought our wakefulness on ourselves, fussed about making us as comfortable as she could.

The next morning we found we had reached England.

Two returns have I had to this country after eventful times abroad. The first was before the war, after a year of sojourning and weary wandering in the East. Each time the return has been for me something more than the ordinary

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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conclusion of my travels. Each time I had gone away leaving the scales that balanced my future happiness swaying uncertainly; each time returned, eager only, now that I was once more back in England, to see on which side lay the balance of their weight.

By a curious coincidence the second return was to the same port as the first—on one of our dull grey English days, more welcome to the lover of England than all the blazing finery of other parts, with a mist softening the outline of the landscape, and toning to neutral colours the contrasting shades of sea, and land, and trees.

“Well, here we jolly well are, anyway,” said the Yeomanry officer. “They cannot snipe at us from house-tops, or reach our field ambulances with high-explosive shells from long-range guns, or drop bombs on us from aeroplanes.”

This was before the German airship raids on this country had become general, but I don’t think we should any of us have appreciated less the security afforded by our own shores had it been a later date.

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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Yes, here we jolly well were, back once more in England, and heartily pleased, every one of us. The navy's method of getting us ashore was as ingenious as the way we had been taken on board. The journey from the ship to the shore had to be made in a tug, and so stretchers were out of the question. Those who could not walk were lifted by two burly but gentle-handed sailors on to a well-padded mattress put beside their cots. The mattress had stout canvas flaps which, when the patient had been laid upon it, could be laced over him. There were cord handles at the sides of the mattress, and the wounded man could be carried as easily as on a stretcher. But the ingenious part came afterwards. When we had been brought up on deck by the same lift by which we had been taken down, the problem arose of how to get us down into the tug, which was laying alongside rolling a bit with the swell. This problem was solved by the mattress, which adapted itself easily to a crane. Lashed firmly in our mattress, we could be secured to the pulley rope,

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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and swung out into the tug without the least difficulty.

On shore our mattresses were lifted on to stretchers on wheels, and we were run up in no time to the hospital. Here we found we were still in the hands of the navy, for it was the naval hospital of the port.

A breezy, cheerful naval doctor greeted us on our arrival, and we had a naval orderly and naval Sisters. We were each given a room to ourselves, which was called our cabin, and here for a few days we settled down. We were extremely well looked after, and everything possible was done to make us comfortable. However, human beings will be human beings, and we most of us wanted to get to our homes, or to London, where we could see our friends. This desire on our part created slight difficulties. For the first time we heard of the mysterious things called Medical Boards. Before we could possibly leave the hospital we must be "boarded," they all told us. Just what being "boarded" was we did not quite understand; however, we expressed our

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## IN THE HANDS OF THE NAVY

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dutiful preparedness to conform to whatever regulations there might be, and waited.

A day or two longer passed, and some of us said we would like to get off the following day. That would be impossible, the Sister said. We could not go until we had had our Medical Board.

"Well, when could we have it?" we asked.

The Sister said that the Army Medical Authorities had been written to, and that it was hoped they would be able to board us the next day. Our Medical Boards, she said, had nothing to do with the naval medical people.

I saw in the situation the elements of infinite delay. As army officers we were in a naval hospital which we could not leave without being boarded by the Army Medical Authorities, who, in their turn, had no business in the naval hospital. No doubt a correspondence would be started between the two authorities and the War Office and Admiralty, which such a nice point might easily carry well over Christmas, and in the meantime we should stay where we were.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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I saw that if I wanted to get to London something would have to be done, and started to agitate. Everybody was most awfully kind to me, and I am ashamed now of the fuss I made. I remember that by the end of the day I had collected in my room the General Commanding the District, the naval Surgeon-General, the naval doctor who was looking after me, the Sister, and the army medical doctor. They all stood round the foot of my bed and looked at me, while I reiterated my request to be boarded forthwith, and allowed to go to London. The General Commanding the District was a very kind man, and did not know what to say. However, the army medical doctor settled the point by saying that I was hysterical, and not in a fit state to travel. In this, no doubt, he was right; and I am sure I have made a very much better recovery than I should have done had I been allowed to travel when I wanted to.

## LONDON

After a few more days at the naval hospital, I was considered sufficiently well to be allowed to go on to London. Two little formalities had to be gone through before I could leave. One was the Medical Board, for which it was arranged that I should be transported to the military hospital in a motor ambulance; the other was a document I had to sign saying that I left the hospital at my own desire, and took full responsibility for my action.

It was with very real regret that I said goodbye to the naval surgeon, and the Sister, and the orderly. They had all been most awfully good to me, and to all of us soldiers who had invaded their hospital.

The ambulance which took us to our Medical Board was yet a further triumph of the ingenuity

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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of the navy. It was made from a converted motor-bus, with stretchers on steel springs, fitted inside, and pneumatic instead of solid rubber tyres. Not a jolt did we feel as we rumbled over the none too even streets of the port. The army doctors were ready for us when we arrived at the hospital, and to save our being moved, "boarded" us where we lay in the ambulance. A few questions, a few notes on sheets of blue paper, and the Board was over. One of the party was given six weeks, another two months, and myself three months.

The ambulance then took me on to the station. Travelling as I was, at my own request and on my own responsibility, I had to make my own arrangements for the journey. These, no doubt, were very carefully watched by the hospital authorities, to see that I was not planning to do anything foolish, but at the time the undertaking gave me a great sense of independence. The train I had looked out was the ordinary fast midday passenger train to London.

I was taken from the ambulance, and put on

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## LONDON

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my stretcher on a luggage trolley, and wheeled along the station platform. Wounded were not then as common a sight as they are now, and my appearance on the platform wrapped in rugs and bandages, flat on my back on a luggage trolley, attracted a good deal of attention. One dear old lady positively shuddered as I went by. Fearing she might think I was a corpse, I winked at her reassuringly.

The train came in, and I was lifted on to the seat of a first-class compartment. At this point I said good-bye to the naval orderlies, and became a private and independent person. As my independence was limited to what I could do for myself with my hands, and I was quite incapable of moving from the position I had been put in on the seat, it did not go very far. However, at this juncture my fellow-travellers took charge of me, and I had a most pleasant journey. The restaurant attendant brought me along an excellent lunch, and I had another bottle of beer. I may seem to harp on beer rather, but it must be remembered that it is not the national bever-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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age of France, and so all the more appreciated when one gets back to England.

An uncle and an aunt met me at the London terminus, and I was taken off to the officers' hospital it had been arranged I should go to. This hospital is the oldest established of any private officers' hospital in London, and a triumph of wonderful organization. The lady who runs it, largely at her own expense, has made the place a pattern of comfort and efficiency. With the greater needs of this war, she has accepted the loan of other houses as hospitals, and the help in running them of other ladies as kind-hearted as herself. But it is to the untiring devotion of Sister M. and her sister that her splendid organization for restoring wounded officers to health is in the trim it is.

The minute one got inside her doors, one felt somehow that all would be well with one. There was a businesslike air about the place that inspired confidence. Businesslikeness is indeed the keynote of Sister M.'s hospital. It is the thing that, after her extraordinary kindness and

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## LONDON

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sympathy, strikes one most forcibly about herself. There are many good stories that could be told of Sister M. I should not like to return her hospitality by causing her annoyance, or I could write pages of anecdotes. However, there is one little story which I will not vouch for as true or untrue, but which has so gone the rounds that it can cause no harm to repeat it here. Her hospital is run on a system which is best calculated to ensure the comfort and health of the patients. While they are her guests, officers may have what they like to eat, and who they like to see them; in fact, they may have as much liberty in every respect as the doctor will allow. There are, however, certain rules which Sister M. has made, and which must be kept. One of these is that patients are not allowed to smoke cigars in the wards.

Now, one day, some time ago, a certain gallant General, who had served many years in foreign parts, wished to go to Sister M.'s house for an operation. Correspondence passed between Sister M. and the General, and it was

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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arranged that he should arrive on a certain date. On the afternoon appointed he came to the hospital with his bag and baggage, and, among other things, a box of Havana cigars. The butler in the hall told him that cigars were not allowed in the wards, to which the General said "Tush!" they were the only things he smoked, and he was sure that Sister M. would have no objection.

Preceded by the butler up the stairs, he was shown his room, and retired to bed to rest before the operation the following morning. The box of cigars he placed carefully on the table beside his bed. After tea Sister M. came up to see him. As they were talking, she espied the box of cigars.

"I don't allow cigars in the wards, General; you had better hand those over to me," she said, smiling.

The General, who had had charge of many thousands of square miles in India, looked a little surprised, and laughingly explained that as cigars were the only things he smoked, he

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thought Sister M. would make an exception in his case.

Sister M. said she was sorry, but her rules were her rules, and the General must conform to them. Seeing that she was serious, the General began to expostulate, and finally got annoyed, and said that he did not think the request reasonable, and that he really must be allowed to keep the cigars.

Sister M. looked quietly at her watch, and said that she would come back in half an hour. By that time she would be glad if the General could decide whether he would hand over the cigars or leave her hospital.

When she returned at the end of the half-hour, the General meekly handed over the box of cigars.

Of course this story may be an exaggeration, but it is at any rate characteristic of Sister M.

She rules her kingdom wisely, but very firmly, and no wives, mothers, or importunate relations are allowed to interfere with what she has de-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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cided on as the best method of treatment for her patients. If the wives or mothers disagree with her ideas, and the argument becomes a real conflict of opinion, she treats them the same way as the General, and says they can take it or leave it. If they wish to remove their husband, or son, or brother, from her hospital, they are at liberty to do so. If not, the patient will be treated according to her plans. Needless to say, very few relations are foolish enough to take their belongings away from Sister M. In her house they are in the best hands in London, and nothing that medical skill and careful nursing can do will be left undone to cure the patient.

When I arrived my uncle and aunt were asked to wait downstairs until I had been settled in bed. I was taken up to a large cheerful ward in which there were five other fellows. At no time in one's life is more fuss made of one than when one first arrives in the ward of a hospital. Two nurses simply buzzed round my bed, arranging blankets and cushions and pillows. A little

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## LONDON

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horror of an air cushion—I call it a little horror, because it was by this time in a highly insanitary condition—was removed from me, and another pillow put in its place. The cushion had been given me by the kind gunner officer on the boat, and had been a godsend to my foot on my journeys. I was reluctant to part with it, but the tact of the new nurses easily prevailed. It is the essence of good nursing not to ruffle the patient. A suggestion that the pillow was insanitary would have seemed to me ridiculous, and I should have resented its removal. But when the nurse put another pillow under my leg, and said I should be much more comfortable with that, and actually made me feel more comfortable, I thought no more about the little rubber one, and hardly noticed it had disappeared.

After tea my father, who had only just heard of my arrival, owing to a delayed telegram, came to see me, and in his case Sister M. relaxed her rules of only allowing visitors in the wards between three and five.

Later in the evening the surgeon who was to

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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have charge of me came to make his examination. Three of London's best-known specialists give their services free to Sister M., and each takes charge of a certain number of cases.

There is something about a good doctor that inspires confidence. One feels towards a doctor just as I imagine a horse feels towards a stranger in his stable or upon his back.

The way Mr. X., the surgeon who was to have charge of me, picked up my leg made me feel he would do from the start. He caught it so firmly, and lifted it with such confidence, that I never even had time to wonder if he was going to hurt me. His comment, when I gave a somewhat elaborate account of the injury—"It is a good job they did not get you through the stomach"—was one of the matter-of-fact remarks typical of the man.

The surgeon prescribed dressings and a bath for the limb twice daily, and then departed.

Dinner was a very cosy meal, brought to us in bed on neat trays. We had soup, fish, roast

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pheasant, and whisky-and-soda or claret, followed by a cigarette and a sense of perfect repletion. New members of the ward made friends with those who had been there longer; papers and books and magazines were exchanged, and, of course, accounts of how each had been hit. One long-limbed fellow in the corner, who had not spoken much, broke in with the remark :

“I wish I had not lost my wrist watch.”

“How did you do that?” someone asked.

“It was on my arm, and they threw it away,” he answered.

“How?” I said, not quite understanding.

“What?” asked another.

And then I suddenly realized. Poor chap ! He had had his left arm amputated.

Besides having the D.S.O., the big Irishman who had lost his arm had a considerable sense of humour. He called the remaining portion of his limb “Archibald,” and had a great affection for it. Archibald was not very nice to look at; however, we had got used to the object, which

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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was often protruded over the bed-clothes and examined with loving care by its owner. We had a dainty little ward, with pretty coloured quilts on our beds, and quantities of flowers. Between three and five in the afternoon visitors were allowed, and the ward would be graced by the presence of many lovely ladies. One sunny afternoon, soon after three, we were most of us chatting gaily with our friends, except the Irishman who had lost his arm. He got bored by himself, and thought he would look at Archibald. Out Archibald came over the top of the quilt. My visitor was the first to notice him, and, with a little gasp of horror, remembered a train she had to catch. The other ladies one by one looked in the same direction, and in a quarter of an hour the ward was empty.

The Irishman is now, I believe, out fighting again with his remaining arm. Anyway, I hope he will forgive my repeating this little anecdote once again.

While writing of the lighter side of being

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wounded, I am reminded of a misadventure that befell a friend of mine in a cavalry regiment. He got a bullet through his jaw. The jaw was badly broken, and at the field dressing-station the best they could do for him was to tie his head up as tightly as possible. His journey down to the base in the ambulance train was rather miserable, as he could eat nothing and was in considerable pain. On the train arriving at the terminus, the patients were lifted out of the carriages and laid in rows on stretchers along the platform. The platform was greasy, and the orderlies going round with bowls of soup had to thread their way carefully. My friend said it was sufficiently aggravating to watch others drinking soup, which he could not touch himself, but when an orderly, in stepping over him, slipped, balanced for a moment on one leg, and then sat down upon his broken jaw, he considered the limits of endurance had been reached.

After a few days in Sister M.'s hospital, I was

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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pronounced well enough to be moved on to a beautiful house in Belgrave Square. One or two private people had very generously put their houses, or a part of them, at Sister M.'s disposal, to be fitted up as annexes to the main hospital. It was to one of these that I went, to make room for fresh cases that were coming in and required Sister M.'s immediate attention. The owner and his lady to whom the house in Belgrave Square belonged continued to live in it, as well as the ten wounded officers to whom they were giving hospitality. They had fitted up their drawing-room into a most palatial ward, and the room next to it into a sitting-room. There were four nurses in the house, and our hostess's own servants waited on us. With motor-cars to take us out for drives, any delicacy we fancied for our meals, the constant attention of highly skilled nurses and doctors, we had, I think, as good chances of getting sound once more as anyone could have given us. But more than anything we appreciated the personal care and attention which our host and hostess gave us. With many

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affairs of her own to attend to, our hostess never failed to come round to each one of us once, and sometimes twice, a day, to see that we had everything we wanted.



## VISITORS

**A**S to-day there is probably hardly an existing person who has not someone in hospital whom he goes to visit, or whom he would like to go and visit, or whom he has been asked to go and visit, it will perhaps not come amiss if I discourse a little on visitors and visiting in general.

I have been visited in my time—visited very thoroughly, I may say—by some of the kindest and nicest people on this earth. I used to appreciate being visited. I think everyone back in hospital from the war enjoys seeing people. Half the fun of having wounds is explaining their extent and nature to one's friends; the other half—and both halves might in many cases be qualified by the addition (if any?)—is having them dressed. A wound rises superior to other

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ailments; people cannot come and look at you as they do when you have indigestion, as much as to say they are sorry for you, but they know it is your own fault. The wounded patient seeing visitors is very conscious of his superiority, conscious that he is lying in bed through no fault of his own. Which is the explanation why a man on an ordinary bed of sickness will often decline to see people and a wounded man hardly ever.

Visitors to a hospital are divided into two classes: friends and relations. The relations come first; they come often in considerable numbers, quarrel with each other in the waiting-room downstairs, and later smile across one's bed with an acidity more bitter than any scowl. Of course, it is quite right and natural that one's relations should come to see one at such times. They came to see one christened, and they will—those that survive one—come and stand beside one's grave. In passing—and I hope that none of my relations will take offence at this remark—it is a curious coincidence that these three occasions, the cradle, the grave, and the hospital for

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## VISITORS

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wounded, are the only three on which one's relations can come and see one whether one likes them to or not.

I have an old cousin (by marriage on my father's side) who used to come and see me most regularly. It was her "bit," that daily visit from three to five: one felt it as she sat beside one's bed, knitting socks and giving one a little kindly smile and nod from time to time. "Feeling better?" she used to ask me, when it was time for her to go. "Yes, thank you, Cousin Susan," I used to reply. One day I unwittingly offended her, and she never came again. I asked for my "tablets." My tablets, I should explain, were small white, oblong things, with a little morphia in them, which had been ordered for me by my doctor as a sedative when occasion required one.

"What are those?" Cousin Susan asked, as the nurse brought me the two little tablets on a plate, and I swallowed one after the other between sips from a glass of water.

"Just a little medicine, Cousin Susan," I replied.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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"They are some morphia tablets, ma'am," the nurse explained, "which he takes to send him to sleep."

Seeing the misconstruction which Cousin Susan might put on the nurse's explanation, I hastened to say :

"Oh no, it is not only to send me to sleep, Cousin Susan; I have them for other things, too, sometimes to help me get through tiresome visitors"—and, as my cousin rose hurriedly, and I saw what a mess I had made of things, I added, in a last desperate effort : "I am not a bit sleepy this afternoon."

That ended the visits of Cousin Susan.

Among one's friends I think the people one most liked to see were fellows back from the front, who could tell one how things were going, and perhaps give one the latest news of one's regiment. Fellows back from the front were quite different in their attitude towards one from the other visitors. They treated one as being jolly lucky to be taking a rest in a nice clean bed.

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## VISITORS

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I must say we used to look in the lap of luxury as we lay in our beds in the afternoon receiving visitors. Herbert came to see me while I was in Belgrave Square. Herbert had not been hit, but had spent most of the winter in a front fire trench, with his feet—when he had not got to be walking on them—in a biscuit-box. He came in to see me the day before he returned to France, after four days' leave. I was lying in bed propped up with pillows, a butler pouring out tea for me, and a footman waiting to tempt me with a dish of muffins. I was feeling a little grumpy that afternoon, because I would rather have had a crumpet, and asked the footman if there were not any.

"Go on," said Herbert; "don't mind me. Wouldn't you like the bally thing toasted a bit more the other side?"

I looked up in surprise, but the sight of poor Herbert, with his pack, tattered puttees, and black greased marching boots, and the knowledge that he had to leave behind him in a few hours most kinds of creature comforts, reminded

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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me of my own happy circumstances, and when he said: "Looks a pretty good stunt, getting wounded," I agreed with him.

It is, of course, a good "stunt" getting wounded, and one's visitors are a delightful part of it. Days in bed in hospital pass as quickly and as pleasantly as the endless kindness and attention of one's nurses can make them. But there are times when one seems to be getting on rather slowly, and the silly old wounds seem to be refusing to heal. It is then that a welcome break is made by visitors, and one feels, after they have gone, cheered up as by a merry party. On the afternoons that no one comes, when one has been propped up and arrayed in one's bed-jacket for the purpose, one feels—in the words of the song—"All dressed up and nowhere to go."

There are just two visitors about whom I must add a little more. I must not mention their names, nor draw them in too recognizable a form, for they pay their visits so quietly and unassumingly that one feels that to make a song

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## VISITORS

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about the honour they have done one would be showing the worst of bad grace.

Of all joys, pleasures, and rewards heaped on those back from the front, the visit of these two People is the one that is most appreciated. And somehow, in the middle of all their duties, they find time to go from hospital to hospital seeing officers and men, and giving to each a kindly word and smile. Do they know, one wonders, the great pleasure that their visits give?

Well, we heard one morning that we were going to have the Visitors that afternoon at three. I think by lunch-time some of us were rustling a little nervously in bed. What did one say? What did one do? One was so helpless lying there. We asked our hostess how to address the Visitors. We also asked the matron about our proper deportment in view of our respective injuries when they stood beside our beds. We were, I think, many of us, considerably embarrassed. But when at three o'clock the Visitors came in, all embarrassment vanished. They moved round from bed to bed so

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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easily and freely that one hardly realized anyone was in the room. And during the few gracious moments vouchsafed to each of us, the real friendly interest, the little bits of gossip about the war, made us feel almost as though we were in the presence of our Colonel and his lady. From many a bed as the Visitors passed did I hear a merry peal of laughter ; and many a good story, that had just been told, was interchanged afterwards across the ward. Yet with it all, during the visit, not for one moment did any of us lose sight of the importance of the Visitors, or forget that they *were* a part of the splendid cause for which we had been fighting. Only afterwards each of us felt that such knocks as we had taken were, in that cause, doubly well received.

## OPERATIONS

THIS is, I know, not a pleasant subject to write about. A whiff of something smelly, a period of blackness preceded by buzzing in the ears, a laboured and muzzy awakening, and—well, some people are unwell after taking ether, others are not—which I am is no business of anyone beside myself and my unfortunate nurse. However, pleasant or unpleasant as a subject for penmanship, I do not think any account of life in hospital would be complete without some reference to operations.

Nearly everyone in a war hospital is either recovering from an operation or waiting to have one. It is generally possible to tell in which category the patient is by studying his demeanour. He will either be looking tired but happy, or bravely anxious. Perhaps this is only my imagination, and what I fancied I was look-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ing like myself before and after the occurrence. Anyway, if the patient's face is a mask, no visitor need remain with him long before finding out what his circumstances are. In answer to the inquiry how he is feeling, the patient, if he has had an operation or is waiting for one, will always say so before he says anything else. "Oh, they are going to slice me on Tuesday," he will say, with a not very happy grin; or, "They are going to have me on the slab soon." One old lady was very much upset by this last reply from a wounded subaltern she was visiting, and told another old dear over the teacakes that even if they had given up all hope it seemed so dreadful that poor Archie should talk in that way about his own post-mortem.

Though patients generally refer in grisly terms to the operations they are going to have performed on them, doctors, on the contrary, make extremely light of the matter. "Well, I think we shall have to make a little incision and get that bit of bone out—give you a whiff of gas, you know, and you'll hardly know it has been

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## OPERATIONS

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done," is the cheery formula by which one specialist I was under broke the fact to me that I was "for it."

The whiff of gas, which was followed as soon as I was "off" by a good mouthful of ether, kept me unconscious for thirty-five minutes, during which time Heaven knows what happened to my inside. However, I am all right again now, and at the time was certainly much happier for being so gently prepared for the ordeal.

There is, though, another form of preparation which is lessmistakable. This takes place the day before, and, speaking for myself, tries my temper exceedingly.

The house I was in had no operating theatre, and after the operation had been ordered I was moved over solemnly the day before to the home where it was to take place, wrapped up in blankets and a dressing-gown. I was carried up to my bed in the strange ward, and all the other patients looked at me, knowing perfectly well why I had been brought in. In answer to their inquiries, I replied with forced cheerfulness that

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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I had come over also for an operation. They had most of them had theirs. "Ha! ha! Beastly funny," I felt inclined to add vindictively, but restrained myself.

Tea was then brought round, and as I was sitting up enjoying mine, my nurse came along.

"You had better make a good tea—you won't be able to have any dinner," she said brightly.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Not before an operation; it wouldn't be good for you," she said. "Now, let me see, I must come and get your leg ready some time. I'll do that after I have done Captain Y's dressing."

She hustled off, leaving me to munch ruefully at a lump of cake. Presently she came back with a bowl of hot water and a towel and things. She took my leg, washed it thoroughly round the part that was to be operated on, and then produced a lather brush.

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"I'm going to shave you," she said, and started to lather my leg.

When she produced a gleaming, keen-edged

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## OPERATIONS

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razor I began to get nervous. "Don't you think you had better let me do it?" I asked.

"You can if you like," she answered; "but really I think I can do it quite well. You should have seen some of the heads I shaved in hospital—gashed right down to the bone, some of them, and the hair all matted."

I lay back upon my pillows. I did not in the least wish to see any of the heads she had shaved in hospital. Nor did I like having my leg shaved. I felt like a chicken that was being plucked to be cooked. Rather bitterly I said something of the sort, inquiring what other preparations there were to be gone through before I should be ready for the fray.

"Now, you mustn't be naughty," said the nurse. "If you're good I'll bring you a nice liqueur presently."

This sounded better, and I submitted to the shaving in silence.

The liqueur came later, brandy in a thin liqueur glass. I drank it up; it tasted good, but there was a slight, rather funny after-flavour.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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My nurse watched me, smiling. "Did you like it?" she asked.

"Very much," I answered; "but what was the other thing I tasted?"

"That was castor-oil," she answered. "You didn't notice it lying under the brandy, did you?"

I had to admit that I did not, and that it was a good way of administering the dose.

"Now try and get a good sleep," she said, and tucked me up for the night.

I was allowed a cup of tea when I was called, but no cigarette, and at nine was taken up in the lift to the operating theatre. As I was carried into the operating theatre I imagine I must have experienced some of the sensations of Guy Fawkes when he was taken apart to a small room in the Tower to be asked questions about his other friends implicated in the plot. The surgeon was swathed in a long white robe, and as I came in pulled a long white mask over his face. An assistant stood handy by an apparatus in a box, with rubber tubes. The seven-foot slab was draped in cold pure white.

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## OPERATIONS

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"Now just breathe gently into this," said the assistant, holding a mask over my face. . . .

I think a blank may now be drawn over the rest of the proceedings, until I find myself once more back in bed, the operation successfully accomplished, and feeling in high good spirits, like a child that has got over an ordeal. Nurse is there, telling me all about it, and how successful it has been. There is a bit of soreness round the place, and I am very diffident about trying to move. It is lunch-time, and trays are being put by the bedsides of other patients.

"You'd like something, wouldn't you?" said nurse. "A little tea and toast?"

"Oh, I don't know," I answered, looking at my neighbour's tray. "I'm rather hungry. What are the others having?"

"They are having duck and green peas," said nurse.

I happen to be very fond of roast duck, and said so, saying that that would do me nicely for my lunch.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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"Oh, you couldn't possibly," said nurse firmly.  
"It would make you awfully sick."

"Well, I would rather have the duck and be sick," I replied.

However, there was no getting round nurse, and tea and toast I had, happily for myself, no doubt.

Mine, of course, was an operation *de luxe*. But there are other operations carried out under far different conditions. I have in mind a small farmstead, lying a mile or two back from the Aisne; a little iron bedstead in a small, sparsely furnished room; an untiring, overworked regimental doctor, with a small box of surgical appliances, a bottle of chloroform, and a wad of cotton wool. On the bed lies a boy who has given his left arm for his country. There is no question of roast duck for him, but a mug of ration tea without milk, and a few ration biscuits. As he lies there, picking up enough strength to be moved after his operation, a high explosive sings over the building, and bursts

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## OPERATIONS

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with a crash in the field beyond. The noise makes him start; then he smiles at his doctor, who grins back.

"I had those things buzzing over all the time I was doing your arm," says the doctor. "Had quite a job to keep myself steady and not make a false cut."



## SUNBEAM

SUNBEAM was my nurse—not that this was really her name, or the name by which any of us at first called her. She inherited her soubriquet in the ward in the course of time. I tried calling her “Flossie” the second morning I was her patient, but the matron, who was passing at the time, overheard me and explained that that was not the way for a patient to speak to his nurse, and that there were rules of decorum to be observed in a ward. Thereafter for the next week I addressed her formally as “Nurse X.”

Then one day a new patient was brought into the bed opposite—a slip of a boy with a shattered knee which gave him little rest from pain. He had a roguish look on his drawn face, and was the sort of boy who, in happier times, would have kissed any girl under a piece of mistletoe as

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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soon as he had looked at her. He also was Nurse X's patient, and she took him to her heart the first day he was brought in. Poor lad! it hurt him a great deal every time he was moved, and he had to have his leg dressed three times a day. I watched Nurse X's clever fingers moving among the bandages and bowls. So pretty and graceful she looked with her fair, fluffy hair gleaming in the sunlight. The boy was not an easy patient to dress. He had just come from another hospital, and was querulous at being moved and suspicious of the new hands into which he had fallen. He began by assuming that Nurse X knew nothing about dressing wounds, and gave her detailed instructions about how to take off the old bandages. As she had had five years' training at a London hospital, these instructions were hardly necessary. However, she listened attentively to all he said and followed his directions. Then he found fault with the fresh dressing she put on, and said it was not what he had been having, or what his doctor had prescribed. On this point Nurse X

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## SUNBEAM

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was gently firm, and said that she must be allowed to know. Finally, when the dressing was done, he complained that the bandage was too tight, on which she took the whole thing off again and re-wound the bandage.

Dressed and tucked up once more, patient and nurse surveyed each other. Was there anything more she could do for him? she asked. He did not think there was, and let his head fall back on the pillows.

Nurse X turned to go, but as she moved away his forehead wrinkled with a twinge of pain. She was back by his bedside at once: "Poor old boy! hurting you, is it? Isn't there anything I can do for you?" He shook his head wearily. "Perhaps if I got the pillow under your knee a little higher up it would be easier?" she suggested.

He agreed that that might help, so all the bed-clothes and the cradle over his legs came off once more, the pillow under the injured limb was readjusted, and he was tucked up again.

"Now, Nurse," the brisk voice of the matron

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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was heard behind, "you must go and have your lunch; it is nearly half-past one. I'll look after Mr. \_\_\_\_."

Nurse X went off to her own short luncheon hour, of which a half had already been spent looking after the boy.

What endless skill, patience, and a real love of her work go to the making of a hospital nurse! All day long, from nine in the morning till nine at night, she must move about the ward, going from one patient to another, as there are things to do, or as they call her.

It was the second morning after the boy with the riddled knee arrived that Nurse X got her name of "Sunbeam." He was feeling a little better after breakfast, and sat up in bed among his pillows. A newspaper at the foot of the bed was just out of his reach. He looked about him wondering what to do, then, glancing up the ward, saw Nurse X standing at the open window in the sunlight.

"Sunbeam," he called to her quite naturally, and she as naturally turned at the sound of his

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## SUNBEAM

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voice, "give me that paper, there's a dear thing," he asked.

She came with a merry smile, and reached the paper for him. After that we all called her Sunbeam as she flitted about between our beds.

One of the sterner moments of the day was washing, which took place as soon as we were called. At eight up went the blinds with a click, and basins of steaming water, towels, sponges, bits of soap were put beside each patient on a chair. Those who were well enough washed themselves and those who were not well enough were washed by their nurses. The boy with the broken knee was rather weak when he first came in, and so, for the first few mornings, Sunbeam always washed him. She used to raise him up in bed, sponge his face, soap his hands and arms, dry him gently with a towel, comb and brush his hair, let him look at himself in a hand-glass, and then lay him back among his pillows. This was a process he relished exceedingly, combining as it did the luxuries of a hairdresser's shop with all saving of otherwise daily necessary trouble to

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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himself. But when he was considered well enough to make his own toilet, it was quite another story, and he obstructed Sunbeam in every way. He would pretend to be asleep when she brought the basin of water, and, as patients are generally supposed to be allowed to sleep when they can, she would let him lie undisturbed. He would time his awakening till a minute or two before the breakfast tray was put beside him, and then complain the water was too cold to wash in. To save time and further argument, Sunbeam would then probably wash him herself with the water as it was, otherwise the breakfast was delayed. If the next morning she woke him when washing-time came, and pointed to the water all hot in the basin by his side, he would complain that the steam was blowing in his face and making his head ache. So the game went on every day, generally ending in poor Sunbeam losing and having to do the job for him with towel and sponge.

There was, however, a sterner side to her character—a side we none of us suspected till it

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## SUNBEAM

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showed itself. When our young friend's knee was paining him he gave a proportionate amount of extra trouble to Sunbeam. He would constantly require the pillow under his leg moved from one place to another. In moving the pillow he generally used to help to lift his own leg, as he said this hurt him less than if anyone else did it for him. One afternoon, after trying some half-dozen postures in the space of about an hour and a half, he called Sunbeam for the seventh time and asked to have the pillow altered. Patient and cheery as ever, she lifted back the bed-clothes and waited for him to raise his leg. This he made one or two efforts to do, without success, as he was afraid of giving himself pain. Saying, "Let me help you," she took the leg up herself, and moved it clear of the pillow to make the necessary readjustment. The boy gave a sharp exclamation of pain and lay back on the pillows gasping. When he could get his breath, he upbraided Sunbeam bitterly: Why had she moved his leg without asking him? Didn't she know perfectly well that he always liked to move

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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it himself? She had hurt him very much indeed; it was very careless of her. He burst into tears. Instead of petting him and saying how sorry she was, Sunbeam turned on the boy.

"That will do, Mr. —," she said coldly. "I am quite as competent to move your leg as you are—and you must not speak to me like that, or I shall have to tell the matron." She walked away leaving the boy crying like an angry child.

I was amazed at what seemed almost her harshness, but I think I am well able to follow the why and wherefore of the scene. Let us imagine ourselves in the boy's place, and imagine what his thoughts were when she went away. He was completely dependent on her for all the hundred and one little things which he wanted done for him during the day. Now he had offended her. Well, he could either ask for another nurse or say he was sorry to Sunbeam. Another nurse, who would not know all his little ways, was the last thing he wanted. After all, he must have thought, it was silly when one was helpless to quarrel with people on whom

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## SUNBEAM

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one was dependent. Whether he had a just grievance against Sunbeam—in that she had moved his leg without his permission—or not, he must put up with it. In that moment he instinctively became more independent, and he also—which was more important—pulled himself back from the state of hysteria into which—poor fellow!—the pain was driving him. Which little story, I hope, will illustrate how a good nurse should sometimes be gentle and sometimes firm.

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The weeks passed, and the boy grew well enough to become an out-patient, and came in daily for his dressing. Sunbeam, of course, always did this dressing for him. She was just the same as ever, cheerful, attentive, and clever with her fingers. She generally had the bowl of dressings and everything ready laid out by the time he came. One morning—a glorious morning in June—he came in gaily in a new suit. Sunbeam was busy with another patient, and not quite ready for him. Impatient at being kept waiting, as he was anxious to walk in the Park,

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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he stood by the window looking at the sunlight on the green trees and fidgeting with his watch. Sunbeam looked up and said : " I know what you are thinking—a lovely morning like this you want to be out in the open air and not in this old ward. Well, some of *us*, too, would like to be out sometimes, but we can't." After which she came over laughing to attend to him.

And Sunbeam is, I suppose, still there in the "old" ward (which is really a beautiful, big, airy room, with lovely flowers and blue silk quilts, but still a ward, nevertheless), moving among the chemicals and the bandages—a ray of light in herself and the realest of real war workers.

## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

A SHBY was hit in the right hand, and unable to shave himself. In consequence he had to have a barber in to shave him every morning. Somebody, however, suggested that with a safety razor he could quickly learn to shave himself. As, except for his right hand being knocked about, Ashby was quite sound, he decided he would make his own purchase, and asked the Sister's leave to go out the following morning shopping.

He was at that time the only one of us in the ward who was allowed to go out as much as he wanted. Most of the other cases were still tied to bed or sofa, and many curious glances used to be cast at Ashby when every morning after breakfast he put on his blue mufti suit, and went out to take the air in the Park.

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On the morning in question—that is to say, on the morning following the bright suggestion that he might with advantage buy a safety razor—he went the whole way round the ward asking advice about the weapon. Of course, each person had his own opinion as to the best type of safety razor, and gave it freely to Ashby. One fellow swore by the Neo-strop type; another said the only razor to use was the Quick-Shave; a third considered that for a real combination of quality and economy you could not beat an Apex. The debate about the safety razor raged fast and furious, admirers of one type deriding other types, and giving in detail their experiences of their defects: how one razor cut the patent strop; and another, especially designed for safety, nicked pieces out of the skin; and another cheaper type after one shave would not cut anything at all. As a prospective purchaser, Ashby took great interest in all the advice given him. So did most of the people in the ward, all excepting Flanigan, who said nothing.

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## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

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Poor Flanigan, whose leg had given him trouble during the night, lay well down among his bed-clothes in a state of peevish irritability, obviously intolerant of the endless chatter about the safety razor.

In his turn Ashby approached Flanigan and asked his views. Flanigan thought a minute, then a bright look smoothed the furrows of pain from his forehead.

"I should get," he said, "a Nash-a-Washaru."

"Is that a safety razor?" asked Ashby.

"Yes," Flanigan answered, "not very well known yet—quite a new kind, in fact, but out and away the best that has been put on the market. You'll be able to shave yourself a treat with one; they have got specially large handles that make them convenient for holding in the left hand; they only cost fifteen-and-six."

"By Jove! I think I'll get one," said Ashby. "What d'you call 'em again?"

"Nash-a-Washaru," Flanigan said. "You'd better write it down. N-A-S-H, *dash*, A, *dash*, W-A-S-H-A-R-U," he spelt the name out. "They

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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come from Japan; they find the steel in the old Washaru river-bed; it's the same stuff they use for making the knives the Japanese commit *hari-kari* with."

Ashby was sufficiently impressed to say he thought he would try one of the razors. Flanigan told him the only place he knew where he could get one was Masprey's, in Bond Street. Ashby made a note of the fact, and started off.

When he had been gone a few minutes, Flanigan told the Sister that he wanted to use the telephone for a minute. The Sister asked if she could not do it for him, as he had had such a poor night; but Flanigan said that it was a private message, and that he would prefer to speak himself.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*

Meanwhile Ashby strolled down Piccadilly, and in due course he arrived at Messrs. Masprey's establishment, Bond Street. As everybody knows, Messrs. Masprey do not only sell razors; they also have an attractive variety of useful and

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## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

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ornamental articles very suitable for giving as presents.

Ashby paused a moment outside their windows, looking at the neat cases of hairbrushes, smart gold cigarette boxes, and enamelled waist-coat buttons, with which they whetted the envy of passers-by. Then he went inside, and making for what appeared to be the cutlery counter, asked to see some razors.

"Yessir. What sort of a razor do you require?" asked the suave attendant.

"A safety razor," Ashby replied. "A Nash—." He consulted his notebook.

The attendant began getting out various sorts of safety razors. While he was doing so, a telephone bell in a box rang violently. One of the head shopmen went to the box. When he came out he stood a moment glancing anxiously round the shop. Then he saw Ashby standing by the cutlery counter, and a close inspection revealing the fact that the customer's right arm was in a sling, the shop-walker went and stood beside the salesman.

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“What I want,” Ashby was saying, “is a Nash-a-Washaru.”

“I don’t think we have one of that name,” the salesman answered, “but I can strongly recommend the ‘Neo-Strops.’” He pushed the little box containing the razor towards Ashby.

Ashby leant forward to open the box, when the head shop-walker, with a “Pardon me, sir,” took it from his hands. A whispered consultation followed between the shop-walker and the salesman.

“What sort of razor was it you said you required, sir?” asked the former, returning to the counter.

“A Nash-a-Washaru,” Ashby answered. “They come from Japan. They find the steel in an old river-bed; it is supposed to be the same steel as they use for the knives they commit *hari-kari* with. I was told you had some.”

“No, sir, we have no knives for committing *hari-kari* with,” the shop-walker answered gravely. “I am very sorry. We could get you some in a day or two.”

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## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

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Ashby laughed. "No," he said. "What I want is the safety razor. You have not one of that name?"

The shop-walker shook his head.

"Well, let us have a look at one of these." Ashby leant forward and picked up a razor that had been left on the counter. A look of consternation passed between the salesman and the shop-walker, then the latter, who seemed to be the calmer of the two, said: "Allow me to show you how to open it, sir," and took the razor gently from Ashby's fingers.

The razor once back in his possession, the shop-walker replaced it in its box and put the box back in the drawer.

"Now, sir," said the shop-walker briskly, rubbing his hands, "what can we show you? We have a capital selection of hairbrushes, or"—he appeared to think—"we have some very nice pin-cushions" (at this point the assistant whispered in his ear), "without any pins, of course," he added quickly.

"I want a razor," said Ashby. "If you have

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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no Nash-a-Washarus, I will have the one you have just shown me."

There was silence. Ashby, the shop-walker, and the assistant looked at one another.

"Just let me have a look at it again," said Ashby, stretching out his hand.

The assistant drew back behind the shop-walker, but neither reached for the razor.

"These are rather attractive," said the shop-walker, reaching down a string of coral beads and dangling them in front of Ashby.

Ashby lost his temper. "Look here," he said. "Will you kindly give me that safety razor?"

The shop-walker folded his arms and pursed his lips firmly. "I am sorry, sir," he said, "we have no razors we can sell you."

"Very well, then, please get me a taxi," said Ashby.

The two walked to the door, and Ashby got into the cab, telling the driver to go to another shop higher up the street.

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## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

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As he sat back in the cab, he saw the shop-walker bending forward giving the driver some whispered and apparently urgent instructions. The cab started, but instead of going in the direction of the shop Ashby wished to reach, turned round and made off down Piccadilly.

"Hi!" Ashby tapped on the glass with his stick. "You are going in the wrong direction." He put his head out of the window and shouted to the driver.

The latter took not the slightest notice, but, accelerating speed, dashed on down Piccadilly.

The speed of the cab was too great for Ashby to jump, and yelling and calling to the driver, he was borne down the main thoroughfare and across Hyde Park at lightning speed right up to the door of the private house which had been converted into a hospital. Casting a nervous glance inside the vehicle, the driver climbed off his seat, and with one hand on the handle of the cab, attempted with a stick to reach the bell.

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Convinced that the man was drunk, Ashby with dignity climbed out of the far side of the cab.

"Hullo—have you got your razor?"

Looking up, Ashby saw Flanigan leaning over the balcony of the porch. Behind him were several patients in the hospital.

"Look out—he'll escape," called Flanigan to the cab-driver.

The driver made a grab at the infuriated Ashby. At this moment the front-door opened, and the matron came down the steps, trying to hide her laughter.

"It's too bad of that wretched Captain Flanigan," she said. "As soon as you'd gone, he rang up Masprey's and said that a patient had escaped from a private home, and was believed to have gone to their shop to try and buy a razor. He was on no account to be supplied with such an article, as he had cut his hand with one already, but humoured, and if opportunity offered, put into a cab and brought straight here. I only discovered

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## BUYING A NASH-A-WASHARU

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what he had been doing five minutes ago. Now come in, or you'll catch cold. I do hope you have not made your hand worse, or anything. It was too bad of Captain Flanigan."



## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

A LITTLE lunch at Princes' followed by a joy ride, and a week's relapse, made the medical authorities at Belgrave Square of the opinion that it was time I had a change of air.

Thanks to the splendid organization of the Red Cross, there was little difficulty in arranging this. The Red Cross have a department ably presided over by a lady as well known in Society as she is stately and beautiful. This department exists for the special purpose of sending convalescent officers away for a change of air. I had only to say where I wanted to go, and everything was arranged for me—ticket, railway journey, and convalescent home the other end. Flanigan was also considered ready for a change of air, and we both decided we would like to go to Brighton.

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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Two afternoons later we were sitting comfortably wrapped in rugs in a Pullman car on our way to the sea. The house we were to go to had been fitted up as a convalescent home at her own expense by a lady who lived at Brighton. The home had only just been opened when we went to it, and we found only four other patients there besides ourselves. There was a matron in charge, two trained nurses, and three young lady probationers.

I anticipated trouble between Flanigan and the three young lady probationers from the moment we arrived. Flanigan was not the sort of person who, from a nurse's point of view, made an ideal convalescent patient. His health returned in bubbles, which had to find an outlet somewhere. However, his first introduction to the young lady probationers was not attended with friction. They were attractive to look upon, and he said so to me afterwards.

The morning after we arrived, basins of hot water were brought round, and put on chairs beside our beds, so that we could wash ourselves

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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before breakfast. There were the usual screens in the wards for putting round the patients' beds, but these had all been folded and put away for the night.

Flanigan always made as thorough a toilet as he was able to from bed. On the morning in question he had taken off the top part of his pyjamas, and was leaning well out of bed over the basin soaping the back of his neck. At this moment, in came one of the young lady probationers. Seeing Flanigan in his state of undress, she gave an exclamation, and made to go back through the door. Flanigan, looking up, caught sight of her, and being used to the matter-of-fact ways of trained nurses, beckoned to her to come to his bedside. Hesitating, and much embarrassed, the young lady probationer sidled towards Flanigan. Flanigan, unable to speak for fear of filling his mouth with soap, made a gesture to indicate that he wished her to sponge his back. Misunderstanding his movement, and feeling she must be brave and behave like a hospital nurse at all costs, the young lady pro-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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bationer went and fetched a screen, and with averted head put it round his bed. She then slipped from the ward.

As soon as he had recovered himself, Flanigan indignantly tipped over the screen, dried, and put on his pyjamas. We tried to soothe him by telling him that Nurse Ethel, as the young lady probationer was called, was very inexperienced.

“In any case,” said one fellow, “the sight of you washing is enough to upset any nice-minded girl.”

“What d’ye mean?” said Flanigan in a “Will-any-gentleman-tread-on-the-tail-of-me-coat?” tone of voice.

“He means,” said another, “that she would be overcome by your astonishing beauty. Talk about statuary—I assure you, my dear fellow, I have seen statues; I have seen sculpture in Paris, Venice, everywhere; but never have I seen anything to equal the beauty of your back. Why, that place just above the shoulder where the flea bit you last night—”

Fortunately at this moment the Sister came

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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in, in time to tell Mr. Flanigan to get back to bed at once.

After breakfast we dressed and went out in Bath chairs, or upon crutches or sticks, along the front. It was winter, but a jolly day, with a fresh breeze blowing straight in from the sea.

Flanigan and I took two Bath chairs, and promenaded solemnly down the length of the front and back again. Flanigan confided to me that one of the young lady probationers—not the one who had put a screen round his bed, but a pretty dark-haired girl with brown eyes—appealed to his higher self. Flanigan divided himself into two halves—the half with his heart and head, and the half with his stomach. A thing that appealed to his higher self excited his intellectual interest, or warmed his heart, as distinct from food and the lower things that appealed to his stomach.

“At the same time, she will have to get more handy than she is,” said Flanigan reflectively. “I asked her to strop a razor for me this morning, and she said she had never tried to do

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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such a thing before, but would take it to the butler."

Our discourse on Nurse Maisie's merits and shortcomings was interrupted by meeting an acquaintance who suggested we should go down to the little oyster shop and have half a dozen each.

Anybody who has been to Brighton during a month with an R in it and not down to the little oyster shop that lies in a turning off the front promenade some few hundred yards below the Metropole has, if he likes oysters, missed a very good chance. At eleven o'clock of a winter's morning, with appetite sharp from a walk by the sea, it is possible to do full justice to the excellent oysters at this little shop. Nowhere else do I know where there is a better assortment of peppers and vinegars and flavour bottles, or more palatable brown bread and butter. The sisters who keep the shop, and have for many years, are martinets in their rules, and no one may smoke in their parlour. But a very good bottle of stout can be fetched from the pub across

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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the way. Our half-dozen oysters apiece were followed by another dozen between us, and then we returned along the front with appetites in no way impaired for lunch.

After lunch we went down to the pier to listen to the band, and then back to tea in the comfortable front sitting-room; after which dressings had to be attended to, and we were not allowed out any more for that day.

In spite of Nurse Maisie's inability to strop his razor, Flanigan showed signs of preferring her attentions to those of the trained nurses or other young lady probationers. He contrived that she should be sent out as his attendant when he went out in his Bath chair, and at the end of the week confided to me that he was in love. This was on the Saturday, and on the following Sunday he had arranged to take her to tea at one of Brighton's large, fashionable hotels. (As our health improved we were given more licence in the matter of staying out.) Knowing what the Grand Orient is like on Sundays, I was not quite sure that this was wise of Flanigan,

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whose circle of theatrical acquaintances was, I gathered, large, and who might on a Sunday afternoon easily run into some of his old, more Bohemian friends who had motored down to the Grand Orient for lunch. It would be a pity if such a rencontre were to upset the apple-cart in which he was wheeling Cupid.

However, Flanigan said that he had dropped all such people now, and had no hesitation in taking Nurse Maisie there to tea. He also said he wished me to join the party, as this would lull the matron's doubts as to the advisability of letting the young lady probationers out alone with the patients. I said that of course I should be delighted.

Knowing that I was a friend of Flanigan's, Nurse Maisie used sometimes to talk to me about him. She was aged nineteen, and I think that her heart was also a little touched by the irrepressible young gentleman.

"He is so different from others," she said to me. "He told me that he had never thought about girls at all until he was wounded and help-

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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less, and dependent on what women could do for him. He says that it is only since he has been in hospital, and especially here, that he has come to know how wonderful women are!"

Breathing a prayer for the soul of Flanigan, I made no reply.

Sunday afternoon came, and we all three made our way down to the Grand Orient, Nurse Maisie tripping daintily between our Bath chairs, with her hand on the hood of Flanigan's.

It was arranged that I should "find friends" at the hotel, and say I was going off to tea with them, leaving Flanigan and Nurse Maisie to themselves. Unfortunately, this plan was all too easy to fall in with, for no sooner were we through the swing-doors of the hotel than we tumbled right into a party of two young ladies from the Stage whom I had met in the company of Flanigan. I was leading with our party, and making frantic signals with my hand behind my back to Flanigan, advanced to see what I could do. Flanigan saw the danger and hung back.

I was cordially greeted by the young theatrical

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ladies, who had apparently come down to the Grand Orient for the day without an escort. They suggested I should join them for tea. I thought this would be the best thing to do, as it would give me an opportunity of keeping the field clear for Flanigan. We stood talking some little while, and I observed, while we were there, that Flanigan managed to slip by into the interior of the lounge with Nurse Maisie. The lounge of the Grand Orient Hotel, as all know who have been there, is decorated with handsome palms in pots. These palms provide a certain amount of privacy for visitors. However, the two young ladies, as became denizens of the Stage, had no wish to have their tea behind a palm. They preferred a table in the centre of the lounge where they could see and be seen. A table in the centre was not to be had, but after the manager of the hotel, the head waiter, and two of the lounge waiters had been consulted, it was arranged that they should have a table in the open, but a little to one side. At this table we all sat down, gloves were taken off, bags and

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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bangles were clattered upon the tea-tray, and we began a sociable and jolly little meal.

"Seen anything of Flanigan?" one of the girls asked me.

"Yes, I saw him the other day," I answered.

"He's not in Brighton, is he?" the other asked.

"I don't know where he is at this moment," I replied.

"Dear old Flanigan," said the first girl. "I should like to have seen his funny face again."

"Susie had a bit of a pash for Flany," said the other girl. "Hadn't you?"

She spoke rather loud, and I hoped to goodness that her remarks weren't audible to anyone that mattered. I looked round anxiously; there was no sign of Flanigan anywhere in front, and behind us only a large palm.

"Do you remember, Su, when Flanigan used to take you walks in the Green Park," the girl continued, "and he used to make you sit on the grass, and read poetry to you?"

At this point the palm behind us began to shake violently. The conversation stopped, and

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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the girls pulled their chairs a little further out. A palm-leaf tumbled down the back of one girl's neck.

Through the leaves I heard the low, earnest undertone of a voice I well knew. It was saying :

“It is a very common name. Don't be so ridiculous, dear thing ; they might be talking of anyone.”

“Yes, he was fond of poetry, was Flanigan,” Susie said ; “there was one about the lovelight in your eyes he was always reading to me.”

“Didn't look the sort of chap that cared for poetry, did he ?” said the other.

“Ah, but he used to say that it was me that brought it out in him. He had never known a girl before, he said, not to sit and talk to intimately. Why, he used to hold my hand by the hour, and look up into——”

At this point the palm-tree shook so violently that Susie got up, and before I could stop her, walked briskly round. I heard two sharp exclamations.

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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Following with Susie's friend, I found the former standing face to face with Flanigan, divided from him by a tea-tray. Nurse Maisie was putting on her coat.

"Flany, old thing," said Susie, holding out her hand.

"Come away, dear," her companion urged, "don't you see he's with a friend?"

The "friend" had by this time got up, and was indignantly leaving the table. Flanigan followed her shamefaced to the hall. Later he returned alone.

"Where's Nurse Maisie?" I asked.

"Gone home," he answered. "Wouldn't let me go with her; said she would take a cab."

"Never mind, Flany; we'll console you," said Susie. "Let us all have dinner and go to a show."

The fickle Flanigan, forgetful of young lady probationers and nursing homes to which he ought to return by six, agreed with alacrity.

I was hopelessly involved in the party.

Proceedings started immediately with a round

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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of cocktails. Dinner was a great success, although I am afraid our table was rather noisy. Flanigan was in great form, and his friends laughed at everything he said, in a manner which, had they been on their customary stage, would have insured their being heard in the back row of the gallery.

After dinner we had coffee and liqueurs in the lounge, while the hall-porter telephoned for a box at a concert. The box was obtained, and we set out in a four-wheeler. How we ever all got into the cab, including our two pairs of crutches, I cannot imagine, but it was successfully managed, and the Providence which looks after broken limbs watched over us.

Arrived at the theatre, Flanigan escorted the two ladies to our box, and then said to me that he thought, after our journey, a drink would be good for us.

Feeling it better to go with him than let him go alone, I accompanied him to the bar.

Here an incident happened which I regret to record. Two subalterns were in the bar, who

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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had evidently dined extremely well, one in uniform and one in plain clothes. The one in uniform was behaving himself as an officer should, the one in plain clothes was extremely rowdy. Whether by accident or design, he lifted and drank a drink which Flanigan had ordered and paid for. Flanigan pointed this out. The offender denied that the drink was Flanigan's, and said, secondly, that if it was it did not matter. This was too much for Flanigan, who spoke to him as a father.

Flanigan asked him if he was an officer, and hearing that he was, said that, although he was in plain clothes, it would be better if he behaved as one.

To this the young gentleman retorted rudely :  
" You are drunk yourself."

Flanigan drew himself up with supreme dignity.

" Sir," he said, " I may be drunk—but I am not paralytic."

At this point I intervened and got him back to our box. After the show we returned to the

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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Grand Orient for some refreshment. We were sitting in the lounge, Flanigan on the sofa, apparently united once more in heart to Susie, when the telephone boy came along and said there had been three messages for Mr. Flanigan to tell him if he was at the Grand Orient that he was to go back to the nursing home at once.

"Tell them I am out," said Flanigan, letting his head sink back on Susie's shoulder.

"But you ain't staying here," said the boy.

"Tell them, then, that I am not staying here."

"Beg pardon, sir, they knows that."

"My good boy," Flanigan said, in the kind patient voice with which he had addressed the youth in the bar, "you may tell them at the nursing home anything that you please; but you must not come back and ask me any more questions, or I shall transfix you upon these crutches." He brandished one of the weapons at the boy, who vanished.

A quarter of an hour later a voice we knew was heard :

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## AT A CONVALESCENT HOME

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"Now you must both of you come back at once."

The matron of the nursing home stood in front of us.

Nothing was said that night. The silence in the cab as the matron drove back with us to the home was inky. In the morning we were asked to step into the matron's private sitting-room. Here it was explained to us that the good lady who was giving us her house and hospitality was doing so for our own good, that if we wished to stay out late at night we must go to our own homes; we could not stay where we were, spoiling our cure and abusing our hostess's hospitality.

We left the matron's room ashamed of ourselves. At least, I hope that Flanigan, whom I blame entirely for the whole episode, was ashamed. I know that I was.



## IN PRIVATE HANDS

AFTER a most pleasant stay at the convalescent home, I said good-bye to my hostess and went back to London, where I had been recommended to take a course of massage. Some friends of mine who had a very pleasant house overlooking Hyde Park asked me to stay with them. Lest I should unwittingly cause annoyance, I will not enter into particulars regarding the members of this new ménage, beyond referring, where the accuracy of the narrative makes it necessary, to Herbert, the son of the house, and our experiences in common.

Like myself, Herbert was recovering from injuries he had received in the war. He had been badly hit in the left arm, and for the time being had lost the use of that limb, and his hand also was useless to him. I am afraid that in

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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thinking of my own troubles I was sometimes apt to forget Herbert's.

We used to go out driving every afternoon in Herbert's aunt's carriage. Two very smart bay horses, a very fat and pompous-looking coachman, and Herbert and myself sitting swathed in rugs and fur coats, made, I should imagine, quite a picture of prosperity. I used to keep my bad leg on the seat out of harm's way, but to have it in this position it was necessary for me to sit on the same side as Herbert's bad arm.

One day, as we were going through the Park, I suddenly saw a woman so oddly dressed that she must have attracted anyone's notice. Wishing to draw Herbert's attention to her, too, I quite unthinkingly gave him a bang on his bad arm, saying, "Look!"

Poor Herbert gave a yell of pain, and clutched his bad arm. Then I realized what I had done. By the time Herbert was sufficiently recovered to listen to explanations, the oddly dressed woman was out of sight, and we had a rather icy drive for the rest of the afternoon.

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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Another time I took Herbert to the Carlton to dinner. This little outing, too, was marred by a piece of tactlessness on my part. We ordered oysters and partridge for the occasion. The oysters went down easily, but when it came to the bird, he sent his portion away with an aside to the waiter, and I was left alone with mine.

I began on it, then looked up :

“ That is what you said you’d like, wasn’t it ? ” I asked.

He said that partridge was just what he liked.

“ Is there anything the matter with your bird ? ” I asked.

He said that there was nothing the matter with his bird so far as he knew.

“ Then why don’t you eat it ? ” I asked.

“ Well, you see,” said Herbert, “ I have a bad hand, and am unable to use a fork as well as a knife. So I have sent my bird away to be cut up for me,” he concluded, with acid politeness.

And I wished I had not spoken.

I am not myself over-sensitive about my

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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injuries. The bullet that got me has left me with a limp; for a long time it was a very pronounced limp—in fact, I might say that at one time a more lame duck could seldom be seen hobbling down the street. However, it did not prevent my toddling slowly round a golf-course, and I used to enjoy a stroll down Piccadilly as much as ever. In fact, I really forgot almost about my troubles. However, the other day an acquaintance of mine came up to me in the club.

“Getting on all right?” he asked cheerily.

“Yes, thanks,” I answered.

“Still very lame, though,” he said.

“Well, I am a bit, but it might have been worse,” I replied.

He took me confidentially by the arm :

“You know, I believe you’d be better off if you let them take your leg off, and fit you on a wooden one,” he said.

The suggestion was made in all sincerity, but was hardly what you would call tactful.

Previous to arriving at the two-stick stage,

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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from which I later got to walk quite comfortably with one, and eventually to do without even this support, I spent a long time on crutches. Crutches are quite easy things to use, but when one first begins on them one lacks confidence.

I was first taught to use crutches before I went to Brighton or to stay with Herbert's people. I had lain in my bed in the corner of the ward for many weeks, and was beginning to make what the nurses call a "good invalid."

A good invalid is a person who, after being rather badly hurt or laid up by illness, gets so used to being unable to do anything for himself that he ceases to make any effort, and lets his nurse raise him with one arm when she has to readjust his pillow, and give him things from the table which he could reach by stretching out for himself; in fact, he relapses into a state of apparently permanent helplessness. This is the most difficult kind of patient to deal with, as his condition is largely mental, and his cure while in it is likely to be per-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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manently postponed. I am happy to say that, I believe, I never reached this state, but I have seen fellows, especially those who had suffered a good deal of pain, in pretty nearly as lethargic a condition.

I myself had passed the stage of fretfulness at having to lie in bed, and was getting used to the quiet, happy days as they went by one after another. It was agreeable to lie there and look out of one's window at the bit of sky and the bare trees of the square. A fine day seen through the window gave one almost as much pleasure as if one had been able to be out to enjoy it, and if it was cold and rainy, it felt good to be lying snugly there. The feeling of having nothing to do did not pall on us. We had most of us had a good deal to do out in France, and the absolute rest was very welcome; then the days passed so pleasantly and evenly. We grew to like all the little details of the routine of the ward: our cheery night nurse, who brought us each à cup of tea at eight; the basin

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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of hot water which was put beside our beds, which we could look at lazily from over the bed-clothes until bidden to hasten ourselves and wash; breakfast on neat trays with letters and the morning papers; then shaving, either by the barber who came in every day, or with safety razors ourselves.

The doctor's rounds and any special treatment we were ordered quickly helped the morning to pass, and then lunch, and after luncheon visitors till five.

After tea we had our dressings to be done again, and then it was time for dinner. A book or a visit from our hostess, who always had bits of news to tell us, followed, and then it was time for bed again—bed, which we had never left all day, but which had never had time to become irksome.

However, the day came at last when the doctor, looking at me and speaking to the nurse, said: "I think we may as well get him up this afternoon."

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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I was duly "got up," rather peevish, suspicious of the comforts of the sofa, and more than disposed to give trouble on the least pretext.

In the ward there were fellows in all stages of convalescence, from those still very weak, who were allowed up for an hour or an hour and a half in the afternoon, to the nearly cured, who dressed after breakfast and remained out most of the day. The kind lady in whose care we were had provided us with everything possible to make our convalescence easy and pleasant. There were wheeled chairs into which we could be lifted and taken out on to the balcony or to a sofa in the next room, two motor-cars, and a carrier chair to bring us up and down the stairs.

I got my independence, as regards using crutches instead of being wheeled or carried, in a rather unexpected fashion. As anyone knows who has been in bed for any length of time, when one first gets up one is afflicted by a complete helplessness and sense of inability to walk.

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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When, after a week or so of being wheeled or carried, I was given a pair of crutches, I used them haltingly. I liked a nurse at each side of me, and, if possible, one at my back, and then proceeded at the pace of a snail, propped up on all sides, across the ten paces that separated the sofa from my bed. The floor was of parquet, and, as I thought, slippery and dangerous. Well, one day I sat up later than usual. When the time came to go to bed only the night nurse was on duty. She brought me my crutches, and, taking my arm, started to walk beside me across the floor. Half-way across, a patient at the far end of the ward called her, and, little knowing what she was doing, and before I could stop her, the dear thing left me. There I was *planté*, alone, in the middle of the treacherous parquet floor. There was nothing for it but to complete the journey by myself, which I did with no difficulty, much to my surprise, and ever after walked with facility on crutches.

When I went to stay with Herbert's people,

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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one of the chief occupations of the day was the course of massage which we each were ordered to attend.

The massage place to which we went was an establishment fitted with every imaginable contrivance. Our treatment consisted of three processes. First we went into "the heat." "The heat" was a tunnel-shaped arrangement fitted with electric lamps. The limb was put into the tunnel, a blanket draped round each end, and all the lamps turned on. After being in the tunnel five minutes the heat became intense, and after ten unbearable. At this point it was supposed to be doing one good, and it was at this point also that one had to resist the temptation to turn off the lamps while the nurse was not looking.

The second process was the electric battery. The first day we went for massage Herbert's turn for the battery came before mine, and I watched the gauze being wrapped round his arm, and the wires attached, with great interest. The zenith of the amusement was reached when, in

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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turning on the current, Herbert received an electric shock, and I laughed heartily.

"It will be your turn next, Mr. —," said the nurse to me, and then turned to Herbert, asking him if he could stand a little more current, while the grin faded slowly from my face.

The third process was the actual massage, when stiffened joints were loosened and dormant muscles brought back to use. As far as rubbing one's muscles went, massage was very pleasant, but when it came to coaxing back movement in a reluctant joint, life was not so agreeable. I had a very nice Irish girl to massage me, with the prettiest blue eyes and dark hair. I could not have believed anyone so fair could have been so stern, and used to tell her so when she would insist on trying to get my leg at an angle that even in its normal days would have been a stretch. How they used to work, those girls, giving up all their time and days to getting us sound again!

During our course of massage Herbert and I

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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were each sent off to be X-rayed. Being X-rayed is not an experience which anyone who has undergone it is likely to forget. It is not a painful experience, but it is apt to be full of surprises. For example, one fellow I knew, who thought himself cured, had been feeling for some time a certain amount of discomfort in a limb which had originally been treated for a slight flesh wound, and which had healed up long before the other more serious wound in his other leg was cured. Owing, however, to his saying that this apparently sound limb had started, after many months of giving no bother, to ache and behave oddly, he was sent off to be X-rayed. To his surprise and annoyance, and to the intense interest of the doctors, no sooner had the rays been turned on and the focussing plate held over his leg, than a bullet was discovered to have been lodged there all the time. Back the unfortunate fellow had to go to hospital to have this newly-discovered bullet taken out.

It was on this occasion that a certain very High

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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Personage—and very beloved and respected by all His troops—made a well-known joke. He was visiting the hospital, going round from bed to bed chatting to his officers, asking each what was the matter with them. He stopped by the bed of the officer who had come in to have the bullet extracted, and asked him where he had got hit. The officer explained that he had been hit a long time ago, but that a fresh bullet had just been found in what he thought was his sound leg.

“How was it they never found it before, Sister?” said the High Personage, turning to the Sister in charge of the ward, who was walking round with him.

“Well, Sir,” the Sister explained, “they found it with the X-rays.”

“Good Heavens!” said the High Personage. “Do you mean to say they have to X-ray a fellow *all over* when he comes home, to see if he has got any bullets in him?”

X-raying is, of course, in itself a quite painless process, but there is something rather uncanny

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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in lying there and suddenly seeing one's bones. Also the dark room, the noise the thing makes, and the crackling blue flashes, make one feel as though one is in a thunder-storm.

Finally, and by no means least to be discounted, is the getting in position to have the photograph taken. Surgeons nowadays operate largely on the information they get from X-ray photographs. They have the photographs in the operating theatre, and by studying them know just where to cut to extract the mischief. To locate the bullet satisfactorily, it is necessary to have two photographs—one side view and one full view. Probably one has been used to having one's leg or arm in one certain position, which does admirably for the full view, but makes it quite impossible to take a side-view picture. This was certainly so in my case, and I resented having to have my leg tweaked to the necessary angle keenly. However, it was all for my good, so it had to be done.

Dear me, how that expression "all for one's

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## IN PRIVATE HANDS

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own good" does recur during a lifetime! Caning, the dentist, lessons, and, above all, in hospital. However, in the last case, at least, one recognizes the truth of the not always welcome adage.



## THE AMENITIES OF LIFE

FTER the discomforts of France and the necessary restrictions of hospital life, to stay with Herbert's people was to have a period of golden enjoyment. Their house was the largest and most comfortable in which a man could ever wish to find himself who had nothing to do and, but for the kindness of his friends, nowhere to do it in. A latchkey to go out if one chose; a room with a bright fire; plenty of books; and a gramophone with all the newest tunes if one wanted to sit at home; above all, the never-ceasing kindness and consideration of the hostess and daughters of the house: all these things tended to make one happy. Not being able to get about much, and feeling one had earned a rest after a fairly strenuous time, one thoroughly appreciated the luxury of breakfast in bed, with letters and the paper, a leisurely bath and careful toilet, a little drive to do some shop-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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ping, or into the Park ; lunch at a restaurant and seeing old friends and faces, and back again home for a game of bridge.

I want, before I go any farther, to say a few words about Simpkins. Simpkins was Herbert's manservant, and the most valued treasure of the whole household. He had been in Herbert's battalion of the Brigade of Guards, which he had left after serving his term of service. He is now back in khaki again out in France, but in those earlier days, when it was a question of single men first, as a married man he had stayed on looking after Herbert in his civilian capacity.

As a valet he was priceless, but he had, from a poor man's point of view, his disadvantages. He never commented upon one's clothes, but he made one feel they were shabby. I had not a very extensive wardrobe—not like Herbert, for example, who could have gone on wearing a different suit of clothes each day almost indefinitely. However, such suits as I had I was tolerably contented with. This contentment did not last me long once I had come under the care

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## THE AMENITIES OF LIFE

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of Simpkins. I brought with me two mufti suits for the day-time—a green tweed and a blue serge suit. I meant to wear the green tweed during the week and the blue serge on Sundays. I arrived in the green tweed, but the following morning when Simpkins called me, I noticed he had put out the blue serge.

I said : “ I'll wear that green suit I wore yesterday, I think, Simpkins.”

“ Very good, sir,” said Simpkins, preparing to get it out of the drawer. “ I am sorry, sir. I thought you would be wearing your blue serge in London.”

This made me think that perhaps I ought to be wearing my blue serge suit, and the following mornings I had it put out for me. It wasn't a very new suit, but he used to press it and brush it and lay it out for me each morning as though it had been cloth of gold. Knowing it to be shabby, I got so ashamed of it that I went to my tailor and got another. When this arrived, I said loftily to Simpkins that I thought the blue one might be thrown away. I meant, of course,

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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that he could keep it for himself, but happily, as it turned out, had sufficient sense not actually to suggest so in so many words. However, Simpkins seemed to realize that I meant that he could have it for himself, for he replied gravely that he thought it would be wasteful to throw it away, and that he dare say he could find some poor private soldier in his old regiment who would be glad of it.

The same evening, as I was dressing for dinner, he told me that after all it had seemed a pity to give the suit away, and that he had sold it to an old-clo' man for ten bob.

It was these delightful touches of human weakness, which he always confessed with the utmost candour, that made Simpkins such a rare possession. By the time he had finished with me, I had bought three new suits, a new dinner-jacket, two new pairs of shoes, and innumerable shirts, collars, handkerchiefs, and ties. The further new suits I had to get because Simpkins implied delicately that he could not possibly press the one I had worn the day before in time

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## THE AMENITIES OF LIFE

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for me to wear the following day. The new shoes were got as he found the old ones too weather-stained to take a polish. And as regards the shirts, he had a habit of putting out Herbert's shirts for me as much as to say that he could not really let me wear my own—a habit which made my position seem intolerable to me, and caused only thinly-veiled annoyance to Herbert.

However, though he cost me a new wardrobe and many heart-rendings, I look back upon the time when I was in Simpkins's hands as a time of great personal luxury. Never again shall I walk down Bond Street with my boots so shining or my trousers so beautifully creased.

There is only one sombre reflection that casts its shadow over these happy days. That was a little matter that arose over the question of cigarettes. Herbert always had quantities of cigarettes—of a very good Turkish tobacco—which he used to buy in China boxes, two or three hundred at a time. As I liked his cigarettes, and there was always such a good stock, it

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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seemed silly to go out and buy any for myself. I got into the habit of making myself very much at home with Herbert's. I used to fill my case in the morning and evening, keep a cedar box full by my bedside, and, of course, always help myself from the big silver box in Herbert's sitting-room.

Herbert used to laugh sometimes and say that he really thought I might go out and get some of my own—a joke which I took in the pleasant spirit in which it was meant.

One day he asked me, if I happened to be passing his cigarette shop, if I would look in and order a box of cigarettes to be sent to a certain actor friend of his. He asked me to be particularly careful to pay for the cigarettes there, as he had just settled his account at the shop and did not wish to start a fresh one. I promised to do as he asked, and set out. The cigarettes, which were heavily gold-tipped, were a most expensive brand—fifteen shillings and sixpence a hundred, if I remember rightly (as I subsequently had good cause to). However, knowing that

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## THE AMENITIES OF LIFE

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actors liked expensive things and Herbert's lavishness, I thought no more of the matter, and paid up the cash. A day or two later I noticed Herbert smoking one of these cigarettes. He said he had met his actor friend, who had given him some. As he had not yet refunded me my fifteen shillings and sixpence, I said that I hoped he found the cigarettes good, and that I myself thought they ought to be at the price. I mentioned the exact sum.

Herbert said : "Really ! were they as expensive as that ?" but made no motion towards his pocket.

I have not to this day received the money for the cigarettes, and sometimes think it was a delicate way of Herbert's hinting to me that as I had smoked several hundreds of his cigarettes, I might go out and get a few of my own. The actor—poor chap !—was killed the other day in France, so I shall never be able to find out whether, as I suspect, he passed the box of cigarettes, for which I had paid, back to the ostensible donor.



## PARIS

To complete our cure, Herbert and I were both advised to go abroad. The Riviera was suggested to us, and, the plan seeming pleasant, we set about making arrangements. Once again that admirable organization, the Red Cross, managed everything for us. Accommodation was arranged for us in a private house which had been turned into a convalescent home; permits to travel to France were obtained, and our tickets taken.

Before starting we had to have the inevitable Medical Board. This Board was necessary to certify that we were in need of the Riviera climate. It was therefore highly advisable for us not to annoy the Board. Herbert nearly upset the whole apple-cart. The fault was mine in the first place, for I got hold of the two notices telling us to report ourselves for the medical examination, and reading them carelessly, thought

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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we were supposed to go to the War Office. Arrived at the War Office, it took us a little while to gain admittance—which started Herbert's irritation—and then, when we did get in, our troubles were by no means over. We went up in a lift for several flights, and then began an interminable corridor crawl. As I was only able to get along very quietly on two sticks, this was naturally a slow business.

“It is the Medical Board you want, isn’t it?” said the War Office messenger who was conducting us.

“Yes, it is the Medical Board,” Herbert answered.

We continued in silence down another corridor; then we were told to sit down on chairs. After a few minutes the messenger came back with our papers and said we were to go to the Maxton Hall. Now, this had been down on our orders all along, but we had read it wrongly.

However, Herbert was inclined to put the blame on the War Office for messing him about. We asked where the Maxton Hall was, and were

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## PARIS

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told it was through the Horse Guards. Though this time the instructions were rather vague, the fault was again ours. We had been told that the Medical Board was through the Horse Guards. Of course, Herbert would insist on going to the Horse Guards and asking for it there. No one being able to tell him anything about Medical Boards, he became angry and sarcastic. This was how our Government offices were run ! This was how wounded officers were treated ! It was perfectly scandalous.

A friendly policeman came up and smoothed matters. He asked to see our documents, and, finding we were to go to the Maxton Hall, got a cab and put us in it. The Maxton Hall proved to be some way through the Horse Guards—in fact, after going under the arch, it was a quarter of a mile on beyond the parade ground ; however, I suppose the War Office messenger's instructions were in substance correct.

By the time we did arrive at the proper place, we were an hour later than the time appointed. The secretary to the Board said he was very

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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sorry, but we could not be taken that day. This produced a real outburst from Herbert, who began to argue angrily. The secretary drew himself up with dignity and said that he was very sorry, but he was busy.

Herbert, seeing he had made an error, softened his voice to a politer tone. He appealed to the secretary's good feeling; he explained our position and said how important it was we should be boarded that day if we were to get off soon. The secretary countered by saying he did not think it made much difference, and that we could be boarded without fail the next day. This Herbert said would be no good. The secretary shrugged his shoulders. Herbert tried to bluff him by saying that the Red Cross authorities had arranged with the War Office that we should be boarded that day without fail. The secretary said that the Red Cross authorities had nothing to do with arranging Medical Boards. Herbert then asked him point-blank whether or not he proposed to let us be boarded that morning or not. The secretary replied firmly that we could

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## PARIS

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not be boarded till the morrow. Herbert was then rude.

“ Well, all I can say is,” he said, “ if you call this being busy—having the time to sit here and argue for a quarter of an hour about a thing you could have said Yes or No to at once—I am sorry for you.”

He stalked out of the room, leaving me to make the best I could of his bad manners to the outraged secretary.

In spite of these misadventures, we got our Board all right the following morning, and the necessary recommendation that we should be sent to a Southern climate.

Three days later Herbert and myself, attended by Simpkins, were seen off by his mother and sisters at Victoria Station. We were to cross to France by the leave boat, and our train was packed with officers and men returning to the front. Coming into contact with them brought us once more into touch with the things we seemed to have left behind us so long ago. As we looked at the men, dressed in their handy-

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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looking trench outfit, we could not help contrasting their lot with ours, and thinking how much easier it was to be loafing our way to Paris than to the Ypres salient.

It was after dark when we reached Paris. A Red Cross representative met us at the terminus, helped Simpkins to cope with the French language and our baggage, and stowed us safely in a cab. In those days one of the best, and, before the war, the smartest hotel in Paris, would put wounded British officers up for nothing, charging them only for their meals. Herbert and I had a very nice little suite given us, and an apartment was taken for Simpkins. When we went down to dinner, we found some half-dozen other officers were there, who either held Staff appointments in Paris or were back for a few days' leave. Among these Herbert found a friend, a certain Eustace Harbro.

Eustace Harbro was a young gentleman of most charming manners, immaculate in his dress, good-looking, and universally popular. He had, however, one trait which I quickly discovered :

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## PARIS

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this might most easily be described as casualness. For example, the evening after our arrival he asked both Herbert and myself out to dinner. He named an hour and a well-known Paris restaurant, and we turned up at the appointed time. Eustace Harbro was well known in Paris before the war, and now, as a wounded British officer, received even more attention. The head waiter of the restaurant helped him to order a most elaborate dinner. He pressed good things and wines and liqueurs upon us. Knowing that he was the younger son of a quite penniless and twice bankrupt peer, I wondered at his lavishness. However, this was explained, for, when the bill was brought, he found he had forgotten his purse. The good-natured Herbert, with a wave of his hand, paid for the dinner. The next day I was standing on the steps of the hotel when Eustace Harbro came up.

“ Doing anything?” he asked.

“ Well, I should like to go for a drive,” I answered, “ but I don’t suppose I could get a taxi.”

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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“ My dear chap, I'll get a car.”

He said a word to the hall-porter, and ten minutes later a fine Rolls-Royce arrived with chauffeur and man in blue livery. We drove through the Bois, and I dropped him at a house he wished to go to. I thought what a clever chap he was to be able to get hold of such a splendid car. When I got back, I happened to ask the hotel porter about it.

“ Whose car was that that Mr. Harbro took me out in this morning?” I asked.

“ That belongs to the hotel.”

I thought: “ Well, someone will have to pay for our joy ride.”

Going round to the Accounts Bureau, I told the clerk that the car was to be booked to Mr. Harbro, and so that little arrangement, at any rate, ended happily.

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In spite of the good terms given us by the hotel, life in Paris began to prove expensive, and I was beginning to wonder when, if ever, we should move on to the Riviera. As it turned

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## PARIS

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out, the Riviera was not for me, for in an interview I had with a French specialist he so strongly advised me to return to England and continue the special massage treatment I had been having, that I took his advice.

Saying good-bye to Herbert and Simpkins, who were to continue their way south, I once more took the train homewards, and two days later was back in London.



## THE GOLD STRIPE

**I**T is said, when the first British soldier got back to the trenches wearing the gold stripe to be worn for each occasion a man is wounded, that his appearance created great excitement.

“What is that for?” he was asked.

He explained the purpose and true inner meaning of the decoration.

“D’ye get one for each hole in you?” said a comrade.

He answered that if the holes were made by wounds on two separate occasions he would wear two stripes.

At this juncture, another friend, coming from behind, gave him a gentle prick with a bayonet in the rear. He jumped and expostulated, but the man who had done the deed merely said that he thought while he had one stripe he might as well have two.

I must say that I myself, having caused to be

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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sewn on my sleeve the prescribed bit of gold braid, sauntered along the first morning with a certain amount of complacency. This, however, was damped when I met, crossing the Horse Guards Parade, the Adjutant of my regiment, back from the front. He had been out in France for eighteen months. He had been in every big battle from Mons to Neuve Chapelle; he had had a bullet through his hat, his haversack, and his puttees, but he had not been wounded; therefore, he had no piece of gold braid.

However, though at first the gold stripe met with more chaff than appreciation from the soldiers out at the front, it is an institution which has come into its own.

The feeling among officers who were in the army before war broke out was, on the whole, opposed to the stripe. It was a great innovation, and, what was worse, directly contrary to the traditions of the British Army. It was, they said, more of a Continental idea—a regular sort

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## THE GOLD STRIPE

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of *banzai*, houp-la affair with which they were quite out of sympathy. The British Army which had fought at Waterloo, the Peninsula, the Crimea, had never before taken to hanging itself with gold braid to show it had been wounded. This was the view taken by the old Regular officers of the original Expeditionary Force. However, they are all wearing the stripe now because orders are orders and must be obeyed.

The navy have not adopted the idea. I talked over the matter with a sailor or two without getting any definite opinion. "Stripe?" said one—"what stripe? Why?" He was not interested in the matter. Their executive ring is the one thing our naval officers cling to, and also the badges of rank which entitled them to the letters R.N. You can tell an R.N.R. or R.N.V.R. man from one in the R.N. You cannot from his badges of rank tell a Territorial from an old Regular of thirty years' service.

The fact is, the difference nowadays between a Regular and a Territorial or Reserve officer is

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## HOSPITAL DAYS

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immortal. Each have to face the same conditions; each must, if need be, lay down his life for his country.

It is here that we come to the crux of the question. Our armies to-day are no longer composed of the type of man that they used to be. The type we have got now is just as good; it has got the same old British sporting spirit at the back of it which empties the Stock-Exchange on Derby Day.

But the Army of to-day is not quite the same as the army that was composed of long-service soldiers. The men in it now really represent the country in arms. The butcher, the baker, the candlestick-maker have put away their choppers and aprons and taken up rifles. It is of these men that those opposed to the wearing of a gold stripe should think when they argue about "tradition." We are to-day making tradition—perhaps the greatest in our country's history—and our habits must change in the process.

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